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ALFRED MOND
FIRST LORD MELCHETT

By the same Author.

ALBERT THE GOOD. A Life of the Prince Consort.



Alfred Mond.

from the painting by Sir John Lavery, R.A.

ALFRED MOND
FIRST LORD MELCHETT

By
HECTOR BOLITHO

London
MARTIN SECKER
Number Five John Street
Adelphi

ALFRED MORITZ MOND: 1st Baron Melchett

M.P. Chester, 1906–1910

„ Swansea, 1910–1923

„ Carmarthen, 1924–1928

Baronet, 1910

Privy Councillor, 1913

D.L. co. Chester, 1929

Hon. LL.D. St Andrews, 1927

„ „ Manchester, 1928

Hon. D.Sc. Oxford, 1928

„ „ Paris, 1928

Hon. D.C.L. Durham, 1929

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To

VIOLET LADY MELCHETT

as an acknowledgement of her help
and kindness and because of her own
contribution to her husband's great-
ness; a contribution which shines in
so many of the documents and records
from which the author has written
this book.

FOREWORD

Among the possessions of the late Lord Melchett was a pleasant old mahogany desk, inlaid with ivory, which he had inherited from his father, Dr Ludwig Mond.

I cannot tell whether it was because he was too busy or because he was not interested, but Lord Melchett did not trouble to open the desk during all the twenty years it was in his possession. Yet he knew that it contained the papers and letters of his family, dating back to 1780. It is strange and significant that an ambitious and busy man should not have paused for one day to unlock this door to his family history.

When I came to write this biography, the keys of the desk were given to me, and thus it was my adventure and pleasure to discover the family story, and to make a narrative from the thousands of letters and documents.

Their story gives Lord Melchett such a picturesque background that I make no apology for beginning my record at the end of the eighteenth century. The character, the tastes and the fortitude of his forbears were so alive in Lord Melchett himself that the three historical chapters of this book are necessary if we care to understand the instincts of our subject completely.

It would be impossible for me to enumerate the eighty-three people—Cabinet Ministers, Trade Union Leaders,

Foreword

chemists, secretaries, servants, friends and relations who have aided me in writing this book. Their help has been given so willingly and so affectionately, that I know they would prefer to find my thanks in whatever quality I have been able to put into my work.

HECTOR BOLITHO

Migdal, Tiberias

April 1932

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ALFRED MOND

CHAPTER I

I

NEAR to Cassel is the small village of Ziegenhain, 1780-1830 inhabited by Hessian peasants whose story goes back to the fourteenth century. Among the people who lived there in the latter half of the eighteenth century was a man in his sixties, a Jew, named Baer Meyer Mond. His eyesight was failing. Both his wives had died, leaving no son to succour him. He suffered in his loneliness all the more because the Christians in the village hated him, resenting his industry and the tiny fortune he had saved from his business as a produce merchant.

One day, his dim eyes looked up from the desk to see a company of soldiers at the door. They were wild from drinking—they had swept through the village, bent upon destruction and robbery, and there was no prey more easy for them than the helpless, half-blind, Jewish merchant. They burst through the door and plundered his house, destroying his treasures, stealing his papers and his gold, and leaving him impoverished and alone.

Mond was a devout Jew, so he met his adversity with prayers. He had lost most of his earthly treasures, and he was too old now to gather them together again. His unhappiness was increased because he knew that when he died, he would leave no son, with Hebrew scholarship, to pray for him. New courage came to him with his prayers. He went out from his house and sought about the village for a third wife. He chose one who was a young and pretty Jewess named Zerlina Weinberg. She gave him two sons and the first of these he called

1780-1830 Moritz. This boy proved to be healthy, well-conditioned and scholarly. As the old man watched him grow, he was delighted and he recovered from his despair.

Baer Meyer Mond lived until Moritz was eleven years old. Almost blind, he lay upon his bed, with Moritz sitting beside him. He rolled his old head upon the pillow and prayed

...O Lord, send out Thy Holy Spirit upon us, so that we may worship Thee in truth. Spread the pavilion of Thy peace over us....

He died contentedly, for he knew that Moritz would pray in Hebrew and say the son's Kaddish in memory of his father's name.

They buried Baer Meyer Mond in the little Hebrew cemetery. Young Moritz had stood beside the coffin, as his father had wished. He had said the prayer of his people:

May the great Name of the Lord be exalted and hallowed throughout the world which He hath created according to His will....

...May abundant peace from Heaven, life, redemption, comfort, healing, pardon and enlargement be granted unto us and unto all Israel; and say ye, Amen.

May He who maketh peace in His high heavens grant peace unto Israel and unto all mankind; and say ye, Amen.

Then the boy went back to his mother's house, to comfort her in her grief.

II

When he was seventeen years old, Moritz Mond left the village and the enmity of its dour peasants, and he set out along the dusty road to Cassel. In his pocket was a letter for a silk merchant and draper called Levinsohn, who was also a Jew. Moritz Mond walked through the beautiful streets and he found the home of Aaron Levinsohn; a big, old, gabled house, with high windows and gargoyles which grinned against the sky. In this house lay his fortune and his happiness. 1780-1830

Aaron Levinsohn had come from Hannover. He was gentle and courteous, and he was a Hebrew scholar, with many books and good taste in pictures and colours and brocades. He had risen to strength and prosperity in Cassel and the Christians no longer persecuted him. He was married to Eva Müller, a name unusual among the Jews. One of her forbears had saved a Prince from drowning in a brook, so the Landgraf had given them a Christian name, to help them in their fight against persecution. Eva Levinsohn spoke Italian and French; she wrote poetry and she played the violin.

Moritz Mond went to live with the Levinsohn family; he worked in the warehouse, measuring the silks and damasks which were to make dresses for the Court Theatre. He slept in a room, high up under the gabled roof, and in the evening he would sit with the family, listening to the mother playing the violin, or to old Aaron Levinsohn reading Goethe aloud.

All the cultivated Jews of Cassel came to the house. In the evening they read poems and fine prose. New duets were practised upon the piano, and good wine

1780-1830 was drunk around the table upon which their manuscripts and books were spread. In such a house Moritz Mond forgot the anxiety and unhappiness of his old father. His character became strong, and he acquired a knowledge of books and pictures and music.

Aaron and Eva Levinsohn had no son. But they had three eligible daughters, named Fredericke, Johanna and Henriette. When some years had passed, the young apprentice had proved himself diligent and honest, so it was suitable that he should marry one of his master's daughters. He chose Henriette, with whom he went to galleries and theatres, and with whom he studied French and Italian. He begged her hand when she was nineteen, and two years later he married her.

Now he took the place of his father-in-law in the business, and old Aaron retired more and more to the upper rooms, where he read aloud to the children of Cassel. Sometimes, when there was a great new production at the theatre, which the Elector himself was to attend, Aaron would go to Cologne and buy brocades or match colours for the dresses. But he left most of the troubles of his business to Moritz and Henriette.

III

Moritz Mond was strong-willed and he did not permit contradiction. From the days of his childhood, he had had dark thoughts about the persecution of his race. He was exact in his conduct and in his dress.

Henriette was gentle. She read Goethe and Rousseau and thought that when the time came, she would apply their principles to the education of her children. Her first son died in her arms. Her second son, Ludwig, was

The birth of Ludwig Mond

born in March of 1839. His father's strength and his mother's gentleness were strangely blended in the child. His aunts, who came with presents and clothes for the new baby, wrote of him as a fine little fellow with dark brown eyes and golden-brown hair. While his father worked, and while his grandfather peered more closely into his books with his failing eyes, young Ludwig listened to his mother's instruction. He must be gentle and kind. But this was not all his nature, and when he was five years old he beat a boy for being cruel to a playfellow in the street. Then he found his way alone to the barber's shop and asked that his hair should be cut off. He did not wish to look like a little girl. 1780-1830

The world was full of wonderful mysteries for Ludwig. There was already a scientific curiosity on fire within him. One day, when he was seven years old, he sat at his mother's feet, watching her dark brown, artificial curls, and the restless needle in her hand. He frowned and asked her what became of the wool when a hole was worn in a stocking.

He also had a passion for truth. Once his aunt came to the house and said, 'Dear Ludwig, what am I?' expecting the answer, 'My dear Auntie'. Ludwig muttered, 'Garstig' [ugly], and went on with his play.

IV

In 1848 Europe was devastated by the new cry for emancipation. Louis Philippe had escaped from France, without pride or honour. The Grand Duke of Baden had been forced to give his people the right to trial by jury, and from this beginning all Germany was brought into the maelstrom. England remained comparatively 1848-1855

1848-1855 calm, but in Ireland the insurgents were spreading broken glass upon the streets to maim the horses of the rich. In Germany the struggle was long and terrible. It spread to Cassel, and young Ludwig Mond, then nine years old, put on a red tie and called himself a republican. He gathered the Jewish children of Cassel on to the big landing in the Levinsohn house and there he read Schiller to them.

His old grandfather Levinsohn watched him patiently. Aaron was now so feeble that he seldom left the upper rooms of the house. Sometimes Ludwig would sit with him to hear him tell stories from history—history which gave a background to the new cry for freedom. Old Aaron had been in Leipzig during the battle of October, 1813. As a young man, he had travelled as far as Holland. His stories were exciting to the little boy—Ludwig loved his grandfather with all his heart. He recited his French lessons to him, he read Italian poetry before he was eleven and he played his violin. Sometimes he would share his grandfather's sandwich and glass of madeira. But often, when Aaron dozed beside the tile stove, his eye-shade falling down over his nose, his book lying limply in his trembling, parched hands, Ludwig would plan his own young conquest of the world. His friends gave him the name of *Disputax*, for he acknowledged no authority and wished proof and argument upon every matter which came before him. When he was thirteen, Ludwig was confirmed in the Jewish faith.

From his gentle grandmother the boy learned to play chess. Sometimes he helped his father, when there was a new production at the theatre and great rolls of silk

Heidelberg

and fine stuffs to be measured. But the beginning of his ambitions had been the mystery of the hole in the stocking. In 1853 he went to the Polytechnic, and two years afterwards, when he was but sixteen years of age, he left the school with a 'good thorough knowledge of chemistry'. Thus his future was defined. 1848-1855

V

When he was seventeen, Ludwig was studying under the great Bunsen in Heidelberg. He had already been to Marburg, studying under Kolbe, winning the favour of the great chemist and, in his leisure, indulging in bear hunting and skating. In Cassel, his mother remarked upon his progress. Her letters were full of kind caution: 1857

Suit yourself to all you hear, but do not build your opinions accordingly. That is Jewish ill-breeding. Accept the thoughts that are given to you, work on them, and only after ripe consideration, form your own opinion. Have forethought in choosing your associates....I wish that my children may learn much. I cannot leave behind for them more than their knowledge and a good heart. Herewith I send a lamp, vest, washing, some meat and a piece of birthday cake. When the lamp burns upon your table, it will make you feel at home.

In another letter she wrote:

Herewith I send you some Matzen...when you are eating the Matzen, please remember the deliverance of your forefathers from the pressure and restraint of dreadful slavery.

...So you have had a duel....I hope that the slash on your chest has not been dangerous....Be valiant, but do not seek trouble....I have altered your shirts and made your collar free. Now you can drink with ceremony.

1857 His father begrudged the money it would cost to send Ludwig to Heidelberg. For him, chemistry held none of the mysteries of an adventure. So his mother's sister, Johanna Löwenthal, herself the wife of a chemist, helped to pay for Ludwig's university instruction. Now the young boy had spread his wings, and he had flown far from the limited interests of the gabled house in Cassel. He worked over the bench in his laboratory late into the night. Bunsen would bend over him, or, sitting beside him, he would share the boy's interests, encouraging his experiments, sowing the seed of an adoration which never left Ludwig, even when he was an old man and Bunsen was dead.

Beside the Neckar, Ludwig Mond grew into confident manhood. He climbed the hills and walked through the forest: his prowess and his scholarship were such that the ancient social barriers of Heidelberg were broken down for him. He joined the Corps Rhenania, rising to an honoured place among his fellows. He fenced and he became a skilled fighter and he wrote the names of his many conquests within the guard of his rapier. Ludwig's curly hair was long, but it did not hide the proud scars of his duelling, scars which were more honourable for being upon his crown and not upon his face.

Ludwig hunted and danced, but his experimental bench held him fast. He wished to improve the quality of the brown coal used as fuel in Cassel, and to this end he worked for many months, spurred on by Bunsen, who came again and again to his side, with encouragement and suggestions.

Yet Ludwig did not take his degree in Heidelberg.

The Jews in Germany

He was in debt. But also, he had a secret wish to come 1857
back as an older man and win the honour¹ because of
the merits of his inventions.

VI

Social isolation and martyrdom had increased family 1857
worship among the Jews. The agonies and despair of
the ghetto had taught the early Jews to lean upon the
sympathy of their kind. Much of their religion was
based upon this regard for heredity and relationship.
Living in seclusion from Christian society, they had
married and married again among themselves. Thus it
was that the Levinsohns had cousins and uncles and
aunts in almost every part of Germany. Among them
was Ludwig's uncle Löwenthal; a chemist, husband of
his aunt Johanna, who had paid for his education at
Heidelberg. Löwenthal lived in Cologne, where he was
the representative of the 'Königliche Galvanoplastische
Institut'. He was a pioneer of German electro-plating
and the electro-chemical industry. Ludwig went to
visit his uncle when his studies at Heidelberg were
ended. It was an occasion which he recalled with ex-
cited pleasure until the end of his life.

He first went to see his uncle in Cologne upon a
day in the summer of 1857. It happened that this
was the birthday of one of his cousins, whom he had
never seen before. But his mother had remembered
the day and she had charged him to carry a doll for his

¹ Everything happened as Ludwig wished, for in 1896, at the age
of fifty-seven, he went from England to Heidelberg and the honorary
degree of Ph.D. was bestowed upon him.

1857 cousin, whose name was Frida. It was dressed in the blue costume of a Hessian peasant.

Frida Löwenthal was only ten years old and she took the doll shyly from his hands. She noted his embroidered Rhenania cap, his luxuriant curly hair, and his shepherd's plaid. Ludwig wrote to his mother that the child was pretty and clever. He noted her virtues with unusual care, but he did not know that he was to marry Frida when she was seventeen, and that they were to be the father and mother of Alfred Mond, the subject of this story.

VII

Ludwig wrote a characteristic letter to his mother after he had been in Cologne for three or four days. 'Uncle has a business which is as good as it is comfortable.... The profit, even in the worst circumstances, must be seventy per cent....I have already earned my journey. By a very simple and cheap means, I have turned to account a by-product which was previously discarded in great quantities. That is the Zincvitriol and Saltpetre acid.'

His aunt Johanna was delighted. 'He is really an unpolished diamond....Ludwig has learned to be useful and diligent. Already he has proved this with the Zinc by-product, which for many years has been poured away. Ludwig examined it and out of it obtained a not insignificant by-product. Now it brings in its money every week.'

Ludwig was then eighteen years of age.

VIII

When his last semestre at Heidelberg was finished, 1860 Ludwig went to live with his uncle in Cologne, and thus he watched Frida grow from when she was a child at school. Ludwig became more and more serious. He would sit, with his back against a bag of sulphate of copper, reading Faust aloud. Sometimes he would practise his fencing in the upper room which had been given to him, and his aunt would stand at the foot of the stairs, listening to the swish of his rapier, anxious for the safety of her windows.

For a little time he went to work at Mombach, near Mainz, where he made his first important discovery; a process for manufacturing verdigris. He was still only nineteen and a half years of age when he wrote to his father: 'I had a very favourable result with my first experiment, the production of verdigris. The previous partner had tormented himself with it for months, without result and with great expense. I have produced a good, pure and commercial product, by very simple means, which, I hope, will raise the profit of the factory from fifteen or twenty per cent., to one hundred per cent. This is an enormous difference, from which I also hope to draw my profit'. But what pleased him most of all was that his process eliminated the previously unhealthy conditions in which verdigris had been manufactured.

His employer was so enthusiastic that he signed a contract which gave Ludwig ten per cent. of the profits, a minimum salary of seven hundred Gulden, free rooms, wood and light. Even Ludwig's father, who was generous with criticism and niggardly with praise,

1860 confessed that they were all happy over his son's success.

Mombach was not very far from Cologne, so Ludwig was able to visit his aunt and uncle and his cousin Frida almost every Sunday. He found them exciting company, after the gardeners and vintners with whom he was obliged to live during the week. Frida always recalled his Sunday visits—the dapper figure stepping from the carriage, in top hat and kid gloves. On Sunday they would play chess together or go to concerts. Sometimes Ludwig sang ballads, in a shy baritone, for Frida's pleasure.

The months passed by, increasing Ludwig's importance as a chemist and dressing the affection he bore for his cousin into a pretty romance. One day, when Frida was still at school, Ludwig came over to join them for an excursion to Brühl. The day was sunny and everybody was happy. Many years afterwards, Frida Löwenthal remembered the journey home, in the evening, and she wrote of it thus:

The train was crowded, and our party found seats only in the last carriage, in which the means of lighting were accidentally absent....Ludwig and I sat in a corner of the dark carriage; the others talked and joked and under cover of their merry chatter and laughter, and the noise of the wheels, Ludwig said to me, 'Before I go, let me have the assurance that you will be mine'. I put my hand in his, and bending close to his ear, whispered 'Yes'. I was thirteen and a half years old then, still at school, but serious and grown up beyond my years.

CHAPTER II

I

LUDWIG was not contented with his success. 1860-1861
‘I have not only finished my first process, but have worked out a new one’, he wrote, a few weeks before his twentieth birthday. The new process had the advantages of greater simplicity and it could not be imitated by manufacturers of beetroot vinegar. But gloom pressed in around almost every factory in Germany at this time and Ludwig’s mother wrote of the fear of war, of Napoleon, seeking new conquests because he was afraid for his own security in France, and of her anxiety lest Ludwig might become a soldier. ‘I think it would be difficult for a Jew to become a lieutenant’, she wrote. A friend had told her that ‘nobody can speak of this while it depends upon the reigning sovereign, whose dislike for our people is well known’.

The fear passed by, but Ludwig’s employer was depressed, although the most important verdigris consumer in the country had given an order so big that it paid all Ludwig’s expenses. The fame of the young chemist spread among the manufacturers. As far away as Frankfurt in September of 1859, the proprietor of a factory at Hachenburg wrote to him: ‘In 1851, I founded a wood acid factory, without knowing about the practical manufacture.... The whole lay-out is my hobby and progress must come. I would be very satisfied if you could come to me for a year, in which you would have time for improving the arrangements.... If you are able

1860-1861 to get another, more profitable engagement later on, I shall not stand in your way'.

Ludwig went to work at Hachenburg, and then, after a respite at home, during which there were happy pictures of him sitting with his mother, reading Jean Paul, he went to a Leblanc soda factory at Ringenkuhl. The next interest in his talents came from as distant a territory as the Austro-Turkish border. He was wanted as director for an important soda factory at Alt-Orsova, on the Danube. But Ludwig chose work nearer home, and, in May of 1861, he went to Ehrenfeld, a suburb of Cologne. His employer wished to discover a new and cheap way of recovering ammonia and tar products from old leather, and, living at Ehrenfeld, Ludwig was but three-quarters of an hour from his uncle's home. He still kept the room at the top of the house, but the rapiers were put away. A bench was brought in, test-tubes, retorts and chemicals were introduced, and, in the time he could spare from his employment, Ludwig worked in his new laboratory late into the night. He was trying to discover a way of recovering sulphur from alkali waste.¹

Working thus in the house of his uncle, Ludwig came to know Frida Löwenthal more and more intimately, so that when they were married, they were

¹ The later developments of these experiments, which began when he was still a boy at Ringenkuhl, were the beginning of Ludwig Mond's fortune, for he invented the Mond sulphur recovery process. By this method, the sulphur was recovered from the alkali waste by atmospheric oxidation, lixiviation, and subsequent separation of sulphur by treatment of the liquors with hydrochloric acid. The process was predominant until the invention of Chance, some years later.

saved the experiments and anxieties which are the lot of 1860-1861
wedded people who have never lived in the same house
before. The intimacy between them grew from the com-
mon anxieties and enthusiasms and tastes of childhood.
Ludwig's experiments involved delicate apparatus and
a series of hurdles upon which the sulphur was to crys-
tallise. The smell of the sulphur attracted the cats and
mice in the Löwenthal house, and while Ludwig was
engaged upon his work in the suburb, Frida would run
up into the garret every hour to see that his precious
experiments were not disturbed.

Sometimes, when this fear was removed, she would
walk out to his other laboratory. Frida had always
lived in the atmosphere of chemical research, so it was
natural that she should sit beside Ludwig at his bench.
Sometimes she would fold filter-papers for him and
bore holes in corks. Ludwig always laughed when she
tried to aid him with his mathematics. 'Mathematics
are not for women', he told her. But Frida's knowledge
was more than superficial. Her father had long ago
given her an interest and knowledge of the philosophy
and practice of chemistry which was rare in young girls.

II

The betrothal of Ludwig and Frida was still a secret.
In Cassel, Ludwig's mother made plans for the future.
Her gentle spirit had always suffered from the persecu-
tion put upon her race by the German people. She
wanted Ludwig to escape the long pain of feeling that
he was a pariah in an unfriendly land.

Stories came from England of the great Disraeli. His
origin was no more noble than hers, yet he had the

1860-1861 Queen's ear and he was already a great statesman. The Levinsohns and the Müllers had always been cultivated people, jealous of their learning, and scrupulous in marriage and domestic affairs. There was no reason why her son should live in the darkness of German resentment if another country welcomed clever Jews, giving them friendship and honour. In the early days of her reign, Queen Victoria had gone into the city of London and bestowed a baronetcy upon a Jew. In such a country, Ludwig might come to the honour and greatness his talents deserved.

She wrote to him of her schemes; she read books about England and learned of the successful manufactories in and about Manchester, where a young and clever man might make his fortune. Ludwig was still only twenty-two years of age, and he had lectured to the Gewerb-Verein in Cologne upon 'The Galvanic Battery'. He had stood up before the wise chemists and scientists, looking pale and nervous, but the sight of Frida and her father had revived him, and he had given a brilliant address. Also, his experiments in the garret were successful. He had discovered a way of recovering the sulphur from alkali waste. He took his plans to the most important soda manufacturer in North Germany. After the interview, which lasted one and a half hours, Ludwig was able to write to his father: 'The main reason for my taking this step was to see what the manufacturers would say; what difficulties they would place before me...so that I would not be deceiving myself'. The manufacturer told Ludwig that the discovery presented no difficulties, not only in theory, but in working in mass, and that it promised to

Utrecht

be of great importance. Ludwig patented his process in 1860-1861
England and France, and, with his precious secret in his
valise, he set out for a new appointment in Utrecht.

In April of 1862 a Utrecht manufacturer had written to 1862
Ludwig, '...we wish to make an arrangement with you
for the complete setting up of a plant for the manu-
facture of sulphuric acid from sulphur gravel...could
you please come and see us?'

Ludwig had already been engaged at the old works
at Ringenkuhl, to improve their soda manufacture with
his recovery process, so he was not able to accept the
invitation until later in the year. Every way was opening
up for him. The Utrecht manufacturers accepted his
terms and eventually he set out, with a new summer suit,
blue, 'à la dernière mode, with wide knickerbockers and
jacket'. He wrote with pleasure to Frida. 'For it, I will
buy a straw hat in Frankfurt—those in Cassel are too
old-fashioned for me. Yes, mein Schatz, you will stare
when you next see your smart sweetheart, and I hope
that you will be happy.'

While Ludwig wrestled with the problems of the
plant in Utrecht, he and Frida wrote letters so ardent
that his sister, their one confidante, was obliged to re-
monstrate with him. Frida was still a child; Ludwig's
letters disturbed her to unhappiness. So he resigned
himself to pleasantries and descriptions of his life in
Utrecht. 'I would die of boredom if I did not have my
memories', he wrote. 'These non-dancing, non-
springing Dutch are a dreadful people, monotonous as
their surroundings and as boring and still as their
swamps. Always the same. Mornings; tea and

1862 schnapps. Evenings; schnapps and tea. That is the only change.'

When a few months had passed, he wrote, 'I stand well with my principals and govern them as I wish'.

Yet his eyes were turned towards England. He saw his schemes grow to prosperity in Utrecht. But England was a bigger field, a land of opportunities. At the moment, the second Great Victorian Exhibition was housed in Prince Albert's glass palace, in Hyde Park. Here was a temptation to draw Ludwig away from his Dutch associates, at least for a week or two. He announced his intention and, with sober letters of advice from his parents, he crossed the channel in a cattle boat, the only way in which he could sail from Rotterdam to London.

His mother had sent him woollen stockings and a black cloth waistcoat and she had charged him not to fritter away his attention when he went to the Crystal Palace. She had been told that the Englishman was a strange fellow. 'The best references will be of no use and he will entertain a scheme only if you can impress him. His heart and his purse believe only those things which his eyes can see.'

There were Manchester cousins to welcome Ludwig, but he paused in London for the Exhibition. He wrote to his mother of the wonders of Messrs Bryant and May's safety matches, the kilns for making bricks and the acid-resisting vessels. Then he went to stay with his kinsman, Philip Goldschmidt,¹ in Manchester.

Ludwig went to the little German club which had

¹ Philip Goldschmidt was afterwards Mayor of Manchester; a man both prosperous and honoured in the Midlands.

To England

been formed in Manchester. He wrote sadly to Frida 1862 of the quiet evenings they had together, reading Schiller, in whose name the club had been formed. Slowly his shyness passed, and, sponsored by his rich uncle, he set out to sell his invention to an English chemist.

The English manufacturer of 1860 was not different from his grandson of to-day. He suspected innovations. The Midlands greeted the young chemist with half-hearted interest. He went to the soda manufacturers and found that they endeavoured to make his cause 'as poor as possible'. Ludwig reported, '...the first factory which I visited declared that present conditions were so bad that they could not introduce the invention and make it pay quickly'. In the end he came to Hutchinson's Works at Widnes, in Lancashire. He was able to report, '...the biggest factory in the locality has received my invention most favourably and they have told me that they will willingly pay me the sum of two thousand Thaler,¹ which they find quite modest....I have much good fortune in England'. His cousin Frida wrote to him, 'You wish to come to me!...don't leave England. I write this with a trembling hand, but it must be said....England is the land for you'.

¹ Then about £270.

CHAPTER III

I

1864-1867 **T**WO years were to pass before Ludwig came to live permanently in England, and in this time he accumulated both experience and honour. For these two years he lived at Utrecht and his Dutch employers considered his process so precious that they bound him, by contract, not to divulge the secret to any other Dutch manufacturer for a period of ten years. His association with Holland was made miserable because he almost lost the sight of one eye, from a glowing fragment of calcined soda which struck him. His letters to Frida and to his mother became more and more sad, until the summer of 1865, when he declared his love to his parents and to his uncle and his aunt. Fourteen months afterwards Ludwig went to Cologne and married Frida, 'in the best room...beautifully decorated with flowers and statues'. When their honeymoon was over, they went to live in Utrecht. But England still beckoned Ludwig. He went again to Lancashire and found both Tennant's and Hutchinson's works anxious to exploit his patent. So it was that he brought Frida to the new country. She paused in London, to see 'the great giant city, with its broad streets, its wonderful parks and squares and its driving rain', and then, with Ludwig to protect her, she went to live in 'The Hollies', one of the grandest houses in the village of Farnworth, near to the Hutchinson works. Ludwig was to be Hutchinson's partner, only in so far as his own sulphur recovery process was concerned. His process was perfected, and eventually it

was adopted by sixty licensees, in various parts of the world. His way was softened now and he was happy in his new house, 'The Hollies', so called because of the twenty stiff and spiky trees which stood around the lawn. There was Frida, waiting for him every night when he came home. After long thought, long study of the life about him, he became a British subject. When his work was over, Ludwig would sit up late at night, teaching Frida the language of her new country. 1864-1867

II

'The Hollies' looked out over an open field. It was one of the largest houses in Farnworth, having eight or nine rooms: there was a garden in which all manner of new flowers and vegetables and berries grew, for Frida's delight. 1867

Watchmakers worked in the country about Widnes and Farnworth. They were suspicious Lancashire men, and they did not understand this broad-shouldered German, with his black hat, his black coat and his foreign accent. Everything he did was strange to the habits and customs of Lancashire. He walked arrogantly, with a swing which made it seem that the path belonged to him. His wife spoke little English, and when the butcher came to the door she once had to call Ludwig from his room to speak to him. In the morning, before Ludwig set out for the works, which were some miles away, she would sit at the window with him, combing his long hair, so that all passers-by could see. In the first months they had few friends. Frida wrote to her mother: 'The English say "My house is my castle", but they ought to add to that, "and I am locked up in it"'. She thought

1867 them 'perfectly satisfied when they sit in front of the fire, drinking their tea, smoking their cigar, if the hostess will allow it, and reading the newspaper. That is English comfort'.

Ludwig nursed his wife very tenderly. Their first baby was born in September, 1867, and he was called Robert. Frida wrote to her mother:

...you should see the way Ludwig looks after me. Every morning he brings me in bed a cup of warm milk with the yolk of an egg and sugar. When I come down, I have a cup of cocoa, at twelve o'clock, some soup made from meat extract, which I can highly recommend, especially with egg, and I also have a glass of port.

During the morning, while her baby slept in the orchard, Frida would sit down and write '...she wanted to have "a little chat" with her mother'. Or she would play upon her piano, and stray Lancashire wives, who walked past, wondered and wondered about this strange woman who played sad melodies they did not know, and who could speak so little of their language.

In the evening, when Ludwig came home, happy to be free from the dust and smoke of the factories, they would walk in the garden together. Then they would come in to their evening meal of cold meat, with eggs and baked bread. Frida wrote 'at dinner we drink port and ale-beer, which I like very much and which agrees very well with me'.

III

When her second baby was to be born, Frida sought the help of another woman who lived near to 'The Hollies'. She was the wife of John Brunner,¹ a clerk at the works, who had become the friend of Ludwig. Frida went to her day after day, showing her the baby clothes she was making. The Brunners were 'such dear, simple, good people'.

The new baby was born on October the twenty-third, 1868. He was called Alfred. He was strong, and within two months he had become such a joy to Ludwig that he celebrated Christmas, for the sake of his Christian servants. As they were leaving to go home, he handed each of them one orange. Crestfallen, they carried their poor gifts to their houses, with a sad idea of German generosity. When they bit their oranges, they came upon sovereigns which Ludwig had hidden in each of them.

Upstairs in her room, Frida noted a strange difference in her two babies. A year before, when she had opened her eyes, she had found Robert beside her. Both his hands were open and she had smiled and told Ludwig that the baby would grow up to be affectionate and kind.

But Alfred was born with his hands tightly clenched, and they knew that he would be tenacious and strong. Time and time again she turned to find him lying beside her, his little fists tight, his face radiant with the pleasure his own strength gave him.

Very soon, Frida took her two babies to Warrington to have them photographed by the new, modern

¹ Afterwards the Rt Hon. Sir John Brunner.

1868 apparatus which gave 'a sharp picture in one or two seconds'. 'Only the biggest establishments possess these', wrote Frida. 'The best apparatus here and in Bangor takes fifteen seconds.'

IV

Now that Frida Mond had two babies to care for and also Mrs Brunner for a friend, Ludwig had more time in which to walk about the country or in the village.

Lancashire men had respect for strength and Ludwig's swinging walk and his long coat, which seemed to brush lesser people off the pavement, filled them with awe as well as suspicion. Sometimes he would go to the club, and there, one evening, in the heat of an argument, he opened his coat and thumped his colossal chest. Beer mugs were put down upon the tables and eyes were opened wide. Ludwig thumped his chest again and the little Lancashire men gathered around him. Here was a mighty man indeed. Within a week or two, he was sitting at the table with them, teaching them the wonderful and new game of chess.

He talked about his plans. He declared himself to be a socialist—he would build great works which would be a shrine for his inventions. He would demand obedient and full service; he would be a hard taskmaster. But he remembered the tyrannies and mean tricks in the Dutch works with bitterness. He would have no tyrannies about him. He would build a colossus in steel and stone—towers and steel rails, floor upon floor of immortal strength, and within, he would make a dream come true. A dream of action and invention: the secrets of nature wrested from her—made obedient



LUDWIG MOND

From the bronze statue at Winnington

by mankind for its own enlargement and happiness. 1868
When the game of chess was over, the Lancashire men would gather about him and listen to his story. He had something to tell them they had never heard before. Ludwig Mond, in his black coat, and his monstrous black hat, had become a wonder in the land.

Mrs Brunner's friendship was not sufficient for Frida Mond. She had been used to gifted people, with scholarship and taste. It had been as natural for her, in Cologne, to talk philosophy and art with her erudite friends as it was easy for the wives of Lancashire to exchange the small morsels of gossip upon which they thrived. So Frida was lonely, so much so, that sometimes when he came home at night, Ludwig found her in tears.

At last she confessed her need—she wanted her friend, Henrietta Herz, with whom she had grown up in Cologne. So it was that her German friend came to live with them, and the lonely anxieties disappeared out of Frida's life for a long time. They were able to talk and walk together. They enjoyed music and sober journeys among the philosophers. Now Frida felt that she was strong enough to bestow a little of her learning and taste upon the coarser fibre of the social life about her. There were musical evenings at 'The Hollies'. One night, Frida played to her company and the group of selections she chose ended with Beethoven's variations on the theme of the National Anthem. Frida, who did not know the significance of 'God Save the Queen', was surprised and alarmed when her guests stood up and went home.

1872 When Alfred was four years old, his father came to feel that his present success had its limitations. He had been awarded a silver medal in Amsterdam. Manufacturers all over Europe knew his name, and those who had adopted his patent blessed him. In March of 1869, Ludwig Mond wrote, '...the process is now working in the factory of Maletta Fils, in Rouen. As well as the factory of Smits and de Wolf in Utrecht...my process is already exploited by the following well-known firms: John Hutchinson and Company in Widnes, Charles Tennant and Company in Glasgow, T. Muspratt and Sons in Widnes and Liverpool, and the Netham Chemical Company in Bristol,¹ while a big number of English and French factories are busy erecting the necessary apparatus'. He wanted to go beyond the cramping walls of Hutchinson's works and make his own independent success. While Frida sat with Henrietta Herz, or walked over to watch Mrs Brunner bath her baby, John Brunner and Ludwig Mond would walk far into the country. They were well suited to walk together. Ludwig was almost a visionary; at least a man who enjoyed the sweet torments of imagination. Brunner was very different. He was a clerk at the works, and while Mond dreamed of miracles in chemistry and machines, Brunner realised the dangers of unbridled dreams: he gently urged the merits of fat figures in a ledger and the good, sensible aspects of a business man's life. In the first

¹ Every one of these companies was absorbed into Imperial Chemical Industries when the vast combine was formed in 1926.

letter he ever sent to Ludwig, he began 'Business before 1872 pleasure'.

Their very differences made them suitable companions upon their long walks together. One evening, Ludwig went to his friend and revealed a plan to him. In Belgium, Ernest Solvay was converting salt into carbonate of soda by the ammonia process. Why should he not buy the licence and why should not Brunner join him and work the process in England?

When Ludwig went to see Solvay in his works at Couillet, he found a disappointed man. Solvay had patented his process with all the eagerness of a chemist who has discovered something new. It was not until he had pledged his energies and his money to the new scheme that he turned to the literature upon the subject. Then he found that he had been deceived, for, in both France and Germany, scientists had tried the same process and it had failed. In London, too, there was an empty and deserted works, where Dyar and Hemming had failed over the same idea. Muspratt, Gossage and Deacon had also tried the plan in England without success. When Ludwig came to Solvay, he found a man whose faith had suffered a terrible shock. Yet he believed that the Belgian was upon the right track. In later years, when Ludwig and Solvay were personal and affectionate friends, Solvay wrote of Ludwig Mond's visit to him as 'the first flattering recognition of the value' of his invention.

Ludwig shared Solvay's faith, and he was undeterred by the failure of the process in France, Germany and England. Confident of his own power to make it work, he agreed to buy a licence from Solvay and develop the

1872 process himself. So he came back to John Brunner with the process which had yet to be proved. With the ruthlessness of youth, they ignored the history of failure and formed a partnership. Then they turned their backs upon Widnes and sought for a site upon which to build their works.

One morning, while walking together, Brunner and Mond came to Winnington, a pretty park, in which a romantic house was set. It had been the home of the Stanleys of Alderley and its history went back to the records in the Domesday Book. One side of the house was ancient, built upon an oak frame. The other side was Georgian, with spacious rooms and Adam decoration. The house had recently been a school and Ruskin had been teacher there. Its air was that of an old mansion.

Mond and Brunner walked around it. They realised the advantages of the nearness to coal and to a navigable river and, thus to the Port of Liverpool. There was a railway line nearby, and there was limestone in Derbyshire. Here their works would be built. Here their families would live, Mond in the Georgian side of the house, and Brunner in the old part, which was restored and improved for his comfort.

Soon the gentle Georgian house looked out upon a new and vigorous scene. Wharves grew out from the banks of the river, wooded corners were cleared and a forest of scaffolding and towers rose in their place. Brunner and Mond were partners: they poured their energy and their ideas into the new earth, and, in 1873, they left Widnes for ever.

There was one interruption when Ludwig and Frida

were leaving 'The Hollies'. The poor woman in the house next door had been an extra servant for Mrs Mond, and she had come to depend upon their help. The woman was in despair and her story was carried to Ludwig, busy in his study. He rose from his table, left his plans and his gigantic mathematics and went to see her. 1872

'What are you going to do now that we are going away?' he asked. The woman had always been afraid of the great, broad-shouldered man, with his strong voice: she cried a little and said she supposed she must trust in God.

'Nonsense, you won't have to do that. You can take in washing', answered Ludwig.

She complained that she had no facilities—there was no washhouse. Ludwig went back to his desk. He pushed his plans of Winnington aside and placed a new sheet of paper before him. Upon it he drew a design for an ideal washhouse. The room, with its shining copper and its labour-saving tricks, was Frida's gift to the woman before the Monds left for the spacious and beautiful rooms of Winnington.

CHAPTER IV

I

1873 **T**HERE are old people still alive in Cheshire who remember the coming of the Mond to Winnington, in 1873. They recall the anger of the country-side: people who saw nothing but menace in the advent of this mysterious foreigner with his chemical works. When these loyal Cheshire men looked across the border, into the neighbouring county of Lancashire, they saw the fair land devastated by chemicals. Every flower had withered and every tree was stunted and ugly: the fire-irons in the cottages rusted overnight, and peasants imagined that some day the fumes would stifle them in their beds.

No such horrors were wanted in Cheshire. In those days, the word *chemical* suggested something sinister: the poisoning of the earth and the air. The people about Winnington did not know that Ludwig Mond's plant was different. If only he had chosen to call them *alkali* works, their resentment might have lessened.

Lord Barrymore, Lord Delamere, and many other rigid and conservative Englishmen, owned houses and parks near to Winnington. When they heard of Ludwig Mond's intrusion, they were infuriated. They cursed him for cutting down the trees; their anger filtered from their mansions into the smallest cottages. Even the labourers of Cheshire refused to work for Ludwig and he was obliged to employ Irishmen, who happened to be in this part of the country for the harvest.

Not so many years before, some poor class Polish

labourers had been brought to Cheshire for the salt 1873 works, and in the prejudiced minds of the workmen about Winnington, Ludwig was in some way associated with these squalid foreigners, whom they remembered buying rejected vegetables in the market place and living in a kind of morality which they would not tolerate.¹

Ludwig was persistent. His chimneys rose from the placid park, the skeletons of his towers stood in the place of the elms and oaks. Stamping over the broken earth, his great cigar puffing vigorously in his mouth, he cursed the Irishmen and spurred them on. 'You damned ass of a lazy man', he would say, dragging his black hat down upon his head, moving on from one place to the next, until the works were completed. A strange town, of brick and glass and iron, was built about the placid Georgian house, in which Ludwig had made his home.

The process finally perfected by Ludwig Mond had always been hampered in the hands of Solvay and others by two great difficulties. The ammonia soda process can be explained in simple words. Ammonium bicarbonate is allowed to react with sodium chloride. When Ludwig Mond erected the works at Winnington, he found that the pipes of the plant became encrusted. The sodium chloride solution, brine, contains small quantities of calcium sulphates and magnesium salts. They reacted with the essential ingredients of the

¹ The right to work at Winnington has now become an inheritance, handed down from father to son. In these days of change, the dignity of labour and the pride of old family association still thrive at Winnington, where the great-grandsons of Ludwig Mond's first workmen treasure their tradition of service.

1873 process, namely, ammonia and carbon dioxide, and filled the pipes with the encrustation which stopped the process.

There was another difficulty. The mother liquors, remaining after the sodium bicarbonate had been removed, had to be distilled with lime to recover the valuable ammonia. Unless carefully handled, this process also blocked up the plant within two or three weeks. Ludwig's great achievement was in overcoming these two difficulties. By staying in his works day and night, by adding, correcting and changing, he became master of the process. It was because he was a practical chemist that he was able to succeed where even the distinguished Solvay had failed.

Ludwig's plant began to work. Rails were laid and barges came up the river and were tied to his wharves. 'Old Betty', the steam-engine, puffed proudly; the furnaces glowed, and, at night, the dark chimneys belched fire and sparks against the sky. Frida had to keep the windows closed because of the sharp smell of ammonia which tainted the air. Ludwig Mond turned over the grey-white samples of carbonate of soda in his hand. They were perfect.

He had no wish and no need of the favours of the gentlemen of Cheshire now. To the end of his life, in his most prosperous days, he never even thought of the social advantages money might bring him. 'Don't call me "Sir"—I am not a gentleman—I am a workman', he would say to his men.

Ludwig Mond liked the energy in men's limbs. When he was asked to give a prize for a bicycle race, he asked, 'How much is a bicycle?'

'Twenty pounds', he was told.

1873

'All my men cannot buy a bicycle. But they've all got feet. I shall give the prize, but let them run for it.' And he insisted that they should all start scratch.

Winnington was working now. Ludwig saw the barges go down the river again with his cargo. He came to love the works so much that sometimes he would move his bed into the engine-room and sleep there. When he slept in his house, he hung a long bell-rope out of the window so that any workmen in difficulty could call him during the night.

II

Ludwig did not touch or spoil the old garden about the house. Here, Robert and Alfred played—sometimes with the Brunner children, and also with the old gardener. His name was John Done, and he had worked at Winnington Hall when it was a girls' school. He had seen Ruskin instructing the young ladies in history and art; he had seen them in their long Victorian dresses, walking up and down the paths, balancing books upon their heads, to improve their grace and carriage. So Done had conventional ideas of how the young gentry should behave themselves. He recorded his impression that Robert and Alfred were 'a couple of young monkeys, always splashing about'. But he did not deny them his friendship.

1873-1878

Alfred was robust and blunt, but Robert was shy. Yet they were one in their excitement over the new works their father had built. The endless steam-pipes, the furnaces, and the dark corners were rich hunting

1873-1878 grounds for mischief. They would steal the men's dinners and hide them, or pelt snow and turf at the office boy in the laboratory. They would fill their straw hats with lime, or, riding upon their donkeys, go far beyond the boundaries which their mother allowed. Alfred especially liked to find a pump and turn on the steam, to see how strong it would blow. But the smell of their father's great cigar would always bring them to order. It could be smelled in the works the moment he entered a door. He would call out 'Shift 'em—shift 'em'. Then they would scamper away and wait at the end of the laboratory to watch the little boy who stood there, waiting to brush the master's coat, after he had made his tour among the dusty machines and tables.

The two boys had a German governess and she joined Frida and Ludwig in pampering them and spoiling them. Sometimes on Sunday afternoon they would go for a walk with their mother and father, like any other German family who walked along the mild country paths outside Cassel. As they walked away from Winnington, Ludwig would call after Alfred, 'Don't run, you will get overheated'. Such was his strange care for them, although many people outside his little circle thought him hard and merciless. But this was not true. He employed a hundred and fifty men when he began the works and, slowly, they came to understand him. His justice, his freedom from sentimentality, his earnest and untiring desire for work. Once a labourer fell from a great height, crumpled and still, at Ludwig's feet. The almost swashbuckling manner left him. He bent down over the man. 'My poor man, are you hurt?'

The man stood up and shook himself, and assured 1873-1878
Ludwig that he was all right.

‘Then get on with your work’, Ludwig answered, as he walked away.

One day, when Alfred was only five years old, he walked in the garden with his mother and, as they left the orderly flower beds, they came to an open field, where the daisies grew. His mother was talking to him, and he turned to her and said, ‘Hush, mother, you will wake the daisies—they are asleep’. Many years afterwards, Frida Mond told the story to Mathilde Blind, and she wrote it into her poem, *A Child’s Fancy*.

When they were a little older, Robert and Alfred went to Mr Schelling’s school, twelve miles away, on the road to Manchester. Schelling was Prussian, hard and cold. Frida’s nervous fingers had made Little Lord Fauntleroy suits for her sons—her conception of an English boy’s wardrobe for school.

While Robert and Alfred were away at school, Ludwig and his wife lived through anxious times. Money was scarce and orders were few. The works were not yet successful. Two shifts of men were employed to keep the plant going: conditions were hard, and when the shifts changed on Sunday, the men had to work for twenty-four hours without a break. In 1874, they made eight hundred and thirty-eight tons of soda and lost about five pounds on every ton. Ludwig’s temper became sharper and sharper. He would take off his hat and stamp on it when he was angry—he would look at the dismal figures John Brunner placed before him with rage, but not with despair. John Brunner loved his garden—especially his roses. He could find a balm for

1873-1878 the pain of the balance-sheets by working among his flowers. But Ludwig had no such respite. He took his anxiety to the laboratory. There was no rest for him. Every effort led to loss of money. Ludwig's process produced soda, but reduced capital, so that he could not afford to keep the plant in repair. He lived through a black year in which he saw ruin creeping nearer and nearer to him.

One of the directors¹ of Brunner, Mond and Company, who had worked with Ludwig Mond at Winnington, has described the struggle through which he had to fight his way to success:

With the starting of the works in 1873, there commenced a period of trouble that lasted six or seven years. Although Solvay had achieved quite an appreciable measure of success (with the process), the gigantic task of evolving an economical continuous process carried on in scientifically designed apparatus was reserved for Mond.

No man was better fitted for the undertaking. Endowed with a quick and fertile brain, he readily grasped the reasons why troubles arose, and his thorough training in pure science enabled him to guard against their recurrence. A tireless worker himself, he had no patience with those whose energies were not sustained. Although his house was within one hundred yards of the works, he frequently spent his nights in the factory, taking such rest as he could secure on a bed arranged in the foreman's office in the midst of the plant. Gifted with powerful determination, he could never contemplate his own failure, and had little sympathy for such as admitted theirs.

A friend was once asking him not to be too hard on a man who had failed to achieve a successful result in a task which had been allotted to him, and urged that the man had done his best,

¹ John I. Watts. The quotation is from a paper written by Mr Watts for the *Transactions* of the Chemical Society, 1918, vol. CXIII.

when Mond said: 'Heaven help the man who does his best and fails; there is no other hope, and I have no use for him' 1873-1878

By living in the midst of his work, in those early days, Mond set a wonderful example to his assistants and men. His methods of manufacture were absolutely scientific; there was no 'rule of thumb' practice. Appearance, taste and smell did not satisfy him; he took nothing for granted....For seven arduous years Mond struggled with the problems which the process presented; but gradually, by successive inventions, he so transformed the methods of manufacture that by the year 1880 he was able to claim that the ammonia-soda process was a commercial success.

III

When Alfred came home for his tenth birthday he found that Winnington had become a more happy place. The output of soda was trebled, and each ton brought a profit of one pound. Orders were coming in, and Ludwig, excited by his victory, found a little time in which to join them in their walks. Once, their grandmother came from Germany, and she shocked the old English gardener by poking around in his secret corners with a stick, saying 'Schmutzig, schmutzig'. She was delighted with her grandsons. 'I have never seen better behaved children', she wrote to her husband. 'Alfred is a fine lad to whom a severe knock means nothing. He hit himself against a chair, which left a thick bruise.

"I have knocked my curly head", was all he said. "Does it hurt?" I asked him.

"A little", he answered, and then it was finished.'

There were excitements, too. There was a pond upon which they could skate in the winter. One day Robert disappeared. Ludwig stood upon the edge of a hole in the ice, while the men poked a stick into the water

1873-1878 below. 'My Robert is not down in there', he called. But he urged them to make a new grappling iron in the smithy, and with this, they groped in the dark water. Tears ran down Ludwig's cheeks. When an hour had passed, Robert appeared, having been on a harmless adventure. Ludwig turned upon him and cursed him.

When they were a little older, both boys lessened their pranks and became more interested in the mysteries of the laboratory. 'How does it work?' was their incessant question. The enquiry was the same as that of Ludwig when, as a little boy, he asked his mother about the hole in the stocking.

Once, Alfred and Robert were packed into a carriage ready to drive back to school. There was a sudden commotion in the hall, and their father ran out, throwing his cigar away and calling to the coachman to stop. He opened the door of the carriage, and, jumping in, he boxed the ears of both his sons. 'That will teach you to go away without saying good-bye to your father', he said. Next day, he sent a messenger all the way to the school, with a hamper which was filled with the things which were certain to give them indigestion. But, he added, as an afterthought, a packet of bicarbonate of soda.

IV

Sometimes when they were at home on their holidays, they would hear the bell ring in their father's bedroom at night. Rushing to the window, Alfred would look out into the dark garden and see his father, a great dressing-gown wrapped around him, running over to the works. One night, there would be a complication

Frida Mond

in the machinery—on rare occasions there might be an 1873-1878
accident; a man would be hurt or burned. Then Frida
would join her husband, running out of the house, with
oil and brandy and linen. Once he saw her come back
to tear up the sheet from her bed, into long bandages.
Then he watched her, in the moonlight, joining the
little group about a stretcher. In her gentle way, she
lent every aid to the robust Ludwig. People said that
they were like an eagle and a dove.

CHAPTER V

I

1882 **W**HEN he was forty-three years of age, Ludwig Mond contemplated a scene of prosperity and success. The demand for soda was increasing and the only tax upon his powers was in the doubling and redoubling of the units of his plant. This was not enough for Ludwig's energetic and original mind. Success frankly bored him. He liked the anxiety of difficulties and experiments, so he turned again to his laboratory, this time to grope among the mysteries of the nitrogen problem.

Ludwig Mond reflected that seventy-nine per cent. of the air was nitrogen, but that it existed in an inert and elemental state. Nitrogen was the energy of every living thing and, with the demands made upon it by agriculture, the earth's surface soon became tired. It gave its store of nitrogen to the beasts and the jungles, the domestic gardens and the wheat of Canada most generously. But it found itself exhausted, because it was capable of absorbing the nitrogen back again, very slowly. Ludwig contemplated these facts and realised that, according to the present rate at which it was consumed, there was a possibility that some day the world's supply would be exhausted. Without nitrogen man would wither and die.

The nitrogen in the air would be of value when combined with hydrogen, as ammonia, or with oxygen, as nitrate. At the time when Ludwig Mond thought of these things, the only means by which the free nitrogen

of the air could be brought into these useful forms was 1882
through organic life or in the rare areas of the earth
where there was volcanic energy.

Ludwig's ammonia soda process required big quantities of ammonia, and one of his difficulties had always been to obtain enough for his works. His sources of supply were the big illuminating gas works where ammonia (composed of nitrogen and hydrogen) was one of the by-products of producing gas from coal.

This method of supplying ammonia was far from satisfactory. The ammonia had to be brought to Winnington in a diluted state and the cost of transportation and concentration was very great.

His own need was not all. In one year Europe paid six and a half million pounds to South America for nitrogen, to refresh her tired acres. Thus faced with his own need for ammonia and the world's need for the nitrogen, which was part of it, Ludwig Mond found a new field for research. With his inventions and extensions of gas-producing plants, he did much to save the great waste that had been going on in ordinary combustion and treatment of coal.

II

Through all the years until he was established in his 1878-1880
own manhood, Alfred was subdued by the strength of his father's character. Ludwig Mond was a great man: he was surrounded by the trappings of achievement and success. But his was the greatness which enjoyed obedience to his will. He liked to feel that he was the head of a vast family whose fortunes were improved by

1878-1880 his talents. When he was old, he gathered about him all the power and dominion of a great Jewish patriarch. Then, as in the beginning, his personality was so tremendous that other men lost colour when they came near to him.

Alfred Mond kept no diaries and no souvenirs of his childhood. He may have had some wistful reasons for destroying the letters and the little objects which might have reminded him of his teens. Very often, when he was older, he would recall the fears which disturbed him as a child, the sense of distance which existed, perhaps through his own fault, between himself and his father. There was a reason for this difference between father and son. Ludwig and Frida remained German all through their lives. In the later days of prosperity, when they gathered a coterie about themselves in London, the note of their society was essentially international and cosmopolitan.

From the beginning, Alfred was curiously English in his outlook. With the Jews, racial instinct had always been stronger than national characteristics. The Monds were Jews by blood and German by the superficial accident which brought their ancestors there, possibly from Spain, whence they were driven by the fury of the Catholics. Alfred broke away from the German life of his family. He was attracted by the rugged courage of English character. He became a British Imperialist when he was older, sincerely, and with deep conviction. He took the English cloak upon his shoulders with ease and because it delighted him. But it marked him as being different from the other members of his family. It was not until the last years of Ludwig Mond's life that he

came to understand and appreciate the talents his son possessed. 1878-1880

So it is that Mond's early story is told in the shadows of misunderstanding. Robert was a brilliant scholar, but Alfred was the fool of the family. In Robert, Ludwig Mond saw the flowering of his own ambitions, the fruit of his own intellectual growth, the hope of scientific greatness. He frowned upon Alfred and misunderstood him.

We have nothing but scraps of material from which to write the story of Alfred Mond's years at school. From Schelling's he went to Cheltenham, and there he felt the first depressions which an English public school could impose upon a boy who was a German and a Jew—a boy whose personality had not yet achieved an attractive form.

He was a stranger in this English place. He was not good at games, and when he was told to write an essay, innocent of rule and tradition, he wrote it in blank verse. Schoolmasters are sometimes capable of stupidity which is devilish. Alfred's ears were boxed, because, the master said, such a form of essay writing was insulting to him.

It was at Cheltenham that Alfred drifted into the maelstrom of religious instruction for the first time. At Winnington, his father and mother and Miss Herz would discuss philosophy and comparative religion at breakfast. The character of his home was broad and learned, and from the moment they rose from their beds, the children were instructed and improved. The table talk was never meretricious; they discussed the fine arts and the abstract sciences. Frida Mond had scant gifts of

1878-1880 entertainment where children were concerned. She would make pathetic efforts to lighten the intellectual burden for the children, so she would give them object lessons from the food upon the table. 'Alfred, you must tell me where salt comes from before you put any upon your plate'. 'Robert, you must tell me where sugar comes from before you shake any on to your porridge.'

There was no religious instruction, no effort to impose Judaism upon the children. When he was an old man, Ludwig regretted his omission. When grandchildren gathered about the patriarch, he said that every child should be taught some creed; that in all his life, he had known only one woman who could live without religion; that was Frida, his wife. When Robert and Alfred were young, Ludwig was deeply concerned with Winnington, and he never paused to consider the religious instruction of his sons. So Alfred went into the Gothic Chapel at Cheltenham without the prejudices of most Jewish boys, and none but his own instincts to guide him in making his judgments. The instincts were as strong as any instruction might have been. He was a Jew, through and through. He was alarmed at the account of the Virgin Birth, and from this day of youthful reasoning in the chapel at Cheltenham, until his death, his scientific mind was shocked by the story.

Anxious and curious, he went to his master with his questions. The master shifted uneasily in his chair. There was something precocious, almost unpleasant, about this dark little boy who had read *Sartor Resartus* when he was twelve. The master made a stumbling effort to explain. Alfred said, 'Have you read Darwin?'

The master confessed that he had not. So Alfred went 1878-1880
back to his dormitory with little or no respect for the
learning of the man who had been chosen to instruct
him.

The public schools of England were going through
a sterile time. Cheltenham was no worse than its
fellows, but to a Jewish boy, of rigorous mental disci-
pline, the behaviour of the English schoolboys was full
of mystery. One recalls the story of a school of the
time, in which a favourite sport was to throw bread
pellets at a print of the 'Last Supper'. The great
achievement, was, of course, to hit Our Lord. It was
difficult for Alfred to understand such irreverences
going hand in hand with the unscientific story of the
Virgin Birth. Alfred's contempt for his teachers was
increased when he met his German master. Alfred's
German was so perfect that the pupil was able to correct
the teacher. With ease, he took the Open German Prize
in 1884 and two prizes for German composition in 1885.
When Alfred came to write an essay upon a set subject,
he found his flood of ideas so great that he would write
five or six essays upon the one heading. He set up a
system of exchange, and he gave the spare essays to
dullards who agreed, in return, to relieve him of other
work, which he found tedious. The English youngsters
were willing to exploit his literary fancy and industry but
it did not prevent them from treating him as a stranger.

Old Cheltonians recall a pathetic picture of the boy
kicking a football, alone, hour after hour, so that he
might become competent, so that he might take his
place with the English boys. It was part of his struggle
towards the English idea.

Alfred Mond

1878-1880 Whether it was from his nature or from his environment at the school, we cannot tell, but the moroseness and gruff manner engendered in Alfred at this time affected his whole career. When Robert came in from an adventure or an amusement, he would rush eagerly to his mother or his father, and give them a long, excited description of all that had happened to him. Alfred would come into the house and, sitting behind his book, he would answer an enquiry with a gruff denial—nothing interesting had happened to him; he had nothing to say.

III

1880-1882 In later years, his contemporaries usually thought of Alfred Mond as a business man and as a politician, completely possessed by practical and material affairs. Only those who came very close to him, and the friends he made towards the end, through his work for Palestine, knew the deeper spiritual forces which prompted his actions. Those forces were linked with shyness and a curious kind of sensitiveness which could be traced back to his childhood at Winnington. He suffered under his father's criticism: his instincts led him away from the German habits of life. Alfred was not the boy one might expect from such parents. He had neither their intensity nor their clear-cut prejudices in matters of thought and taste. He had had an English foster mother—perhaps she gave him his more English catholicity of taste, and his tolerance. These two qualities assorted ill with the Teutonic background from which his parents came.

Alfred Mond was clumsy fingered. Whenever he went into the laboratory, he did not handle the appa-

tus adeptly, and Ludwig would look up from his experiments and frown. Yet Alfred's decisions were unerring, his mind clear and controlled; but tidiness, craftsmanship, writing, and all the acts which involved the use of his hands, were clumsily performed. So there was something almost wistful about the boy. His father made him conscious of his own incompetence and, like all children whose actions are pruned and criticised by authority, he suffered adventures of imagination which lead to shyness and despair. To the last years of his life he remembered and recalled a day when he came nearer to terror than at any other time in his life. 1880-1882

Six big St Bernard dogs used to sprawl on the lawns of Winington. Alfred played with them and ran with them and tumbled over them without fear. Once, when he was playing in the garden, one of the dogs went mad. The wretched beast ran about wildly and dangerously and, while the children were hurried to a place of safety, workmen rushed out to capture it. Alfred's tutor detached himself from the mass; the St Bernard chased him along the river bank and on to the swing bridge. Once upon the bridge, the tutor swung it around, so that he was alone, isolated in the middle of the river, with the mad animal. He climbed the railings and made wild blows at the dog's head with a hammer. Alfred used to tell of how from afar he watched it jumping nearer to the tutor. At last the man was able to strike the dog on the head with the hammer, so that it crumpled at his feet.

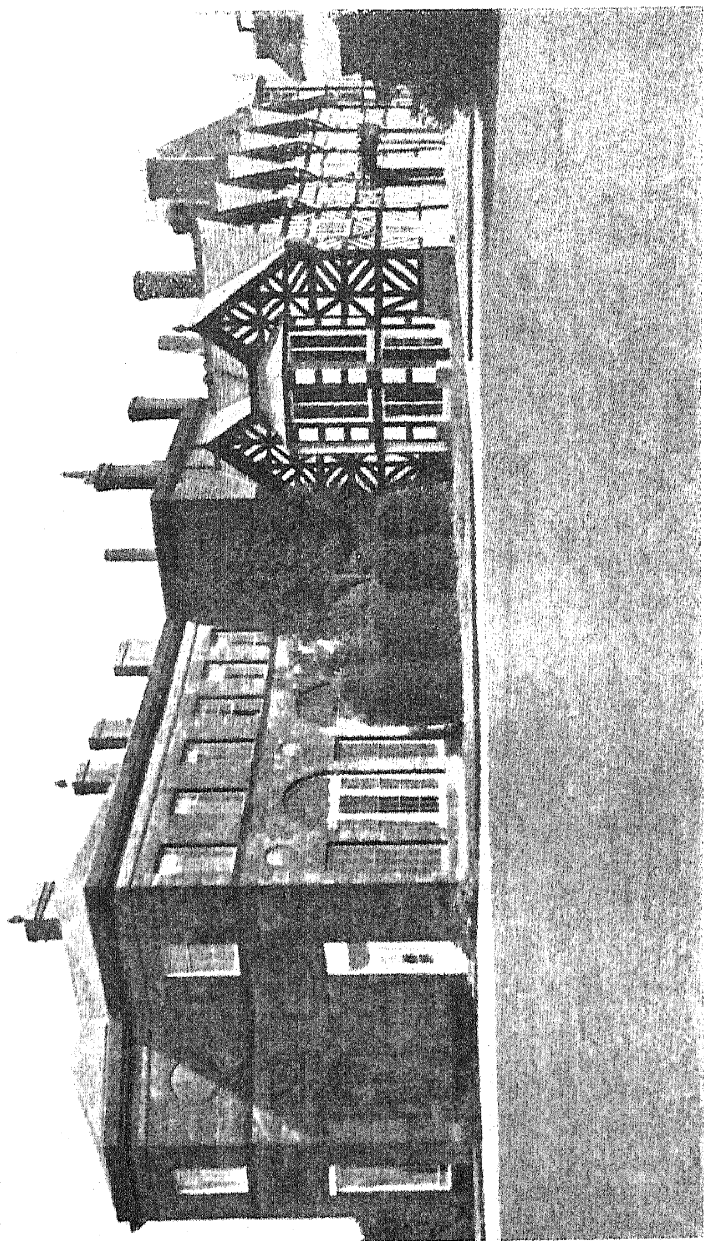
Very often Alfred Mond would tell the story of the group of workmen on the river bank, and the big bridge swinging around—the incident seemed to have planted

1880-1882 the seed of horror in him. At times, when his own childhood inabilities depressed him, the incident gave his imagination something to play with—something to weave into dark fancies. While his young hands remained still and incapable, he seemed to suffer the torments of imagination which so deeply affect the developing character of a child.

IV

Ludwig Mond's power of dominion was physical as well as intellectual. Once Alfred saw a disgruntled Irish workman come to his father, on behalf of the men. The man was big, angry and unreasonable. 'Take off your coat and I'll fight you', was Ludwig's reply to the insurgent. The Irishman became calm and apologetic and went away. Such character might inspire confidence and affection in a great industrial enterprise, but it bred reserve and secrecy in the child. When Alfred himself came to the power and confidence of manhood, he was no less eager to prove his opinion with his muscles. At his first political meeting, with the Liberal Club of Widnes, he stood up, a raw speaker of twenty-two. When a dissentient voice spoke against him, he turned upon the man and said: 'If you don't behave yourself, I'll come and throw you out'. As a young boy he was no less belligerent.

In his struggle to understand the difference between himself and his brother, Alfred was sometimes selfish. Robert was open-hearted, and he turned to his parents for sympathy. Alfred was more secretive, and he was shy of his own parents: he turned to Miss Herz and found in her the sustenance all children seek in their elders.



WINNINGTON HALL.

Prosperity

Many years afterwards Ludwig Mond made a chance 1882 observation which perhaps explains a little of the difference in his feeling for the two boys. He talked to a friend of the joy and the excitement that came to him when his first child was born. He said: 'That first smile, watching him sleep, touching him, feeling the weight of him increasing in my arms, day after day, holding him near me and knowing that he was my own child—my first child. But it was different the second time. Then it was only a repetition of something I had already experienced—it was different'.

So it was that the two children grew up. Robert direct and generous, with a naïve curiosity about everything he touched. Alfred was less interesting as a child. Perhaps the tangled instincts of childhood caused him to defend himself against what he imagined to be his father's prejudice. When the nurse offered him a choice of two presents, he said, 'I will have two'. He became definite and almost aggressive in his character, while Robert was more gentle. Father and son were alike in that they were clear-cut; when they were brought together there was a mild antipathy between them. It was natural that the half-fledged boy, moving towards the powers which developed in his manhood, should resent the bigger authority of his father.

Alfred sought the shadows of introspection.

V

Three years before this time the works at Winnington 1880 were so prosperous that the plant had to be doubled. In 1878 Ludwig looked about for fresh worlds to conquer. Not so very far away from Winnington was

1880 Sandbach, where another factory was working the Solvay process. Ludwig Mond's contract with Solvay demanded that any other manufacturer in England should pay an increased percentage on every ton of soda produced.¹ Under this weight, the Sandbach works were failing, and Mond and Brunner finally took over the management of the works in 1878, and bought their rivals out in 1881. Excited over the new territory which he controlled, Ludwig travelled from Winnington to Sandbach almost every day, crossing over to the new village to wrestle with mechanical problems and experiments. He wanted no more from his success than this—that he should have new machines to engage his hands and new problems to tantalise his imagination.

John Brunner was not a chemist and the prosperity of Winnington meant something different to him—but something no less fine. His money and his powers were poured into the life of the country around.

Ludwig was a scientist and almost a recluse. John Brunner was a great citizen, in the English manner. Ludwig Mond poured his money into his experiments, while Brunner lavished his profits upon libraries and guildhalls. He worked at politics and enriched them, he employed his talents for the human good, in a public way. Ludwig never changed; he never lost the simple touch of the man who designed the washhouse for the woman who lived next door to 'The Hollies'. Honours were coming to him and he had helped to form the new Society of Chemical Industry. Up to then, there had

¹ Ludwig Mond's licence from Solvay provided that he should pay eight shillings per ton of soda but that any other manufacturer beginning work in England should pay twenty shillings per ton.

been no significant attempt to bring the manufacturer 1880 into closer touch with the chemist who served him. Ludwig was both manufacturer and chemist. He had some vigorous lessons to teach the members of the society. A significant passage can be taken from his inaugural address, in which he said:

Science tells us how very far we are from attaining our industrial aims with anything approaching the theoretical expenditure of force. Science also tells us in what directions we may look forward to arriving at improvements. I might say that we are on the eve of creating a science of invention, that is of developing scientific methods for solving industrial problems.

In 1880 Ludwig designed a continuous distiller, which greatly enhanced the efficiency of the plant. He saw the vast network of ideas assume form: he saw Solvay's process adapted and perfected by his own hand, so that there were profits to reward him for his work. In the beginning each of the partners had allowed himself ten pounds a week from the revenue. In 1876 this was increased to thirty pounds a week. From this time the profits grew into a fabulous fortune. In 1881 Brunner and Mond formed the works at Winnington and Sandbach into a limited company, called Brunner, Mond and Co., with a nominal capital of £600,000. The directors were Ludwig Mond, John Brunner, John Crosfield, C. M. Holland and E. Milner. Mond and Brunner retained what amounted to a controlling interest and the right that each of them should hold the office of managing director for life. With the bigger capital in his hands, Ludwig dreamed of new machines and new buildings. The plant grew, and, in 1884, the capital of the company was almost trebled. It became

1880 a gilt-edged industrial investment. New land was bought and the output of the soda increased until Mond and Brunner realised that they had created the biggest alkali works in the world.

Now they were great men in the land. Once John Brunner came to Ludwig, smiling and pleased, with a wonderful balance-sheet. Ludwig turned to him and said, 'we are no longer making chemicals, we are making money', as if it were a tragedy.

There is an old man living near to Sandbach to this day, who tells stories of Ludwig going there. He would walk through the works, straining his temper under the perplexities which surrounded him. When he was greatly worried and tired—too tired to go back to Winnington—he would go to the local inn. Whether it was morning, afternoon or night, he would ask for a bedroom and, throwing the mattress upon the floor, he would lie upon the hard bed and think out his problem. When he had arranged his thoughts, he would rise from the bed, replace the mattress, and tramp back to Sandbach, to work.

VI

With his father thus engaged and troubled, Alfred was left alone, to make his own discoveries at school, and when he was at home, to rely upon Miss Herz for encouragement. A contemporary at Cheltenham has said that Alfred 'showed in his youth no signs of the strength of character which afterwards appeared. He developed later...and grew in mental stature as his responsibilities increased'. So the school story has no brilliant passages. The patient, lonely kicking of the football brought

Cheltenham

Alfred into the first XV of his house, in the autumn of 1880
1884. The same contemporary who commented upon
Alfred's lack of brilliance has written 'John and Sidney
Brunner were both at school with him. Sidney Brunner
was a great athlete, being captain of the college XV,
boat and rifle clubs, as well as senior college prefect.
He was also in the college gymnastic VIII and house
cricket XI. Thus sponsored, Alfred and Robert might
have been expected to be in happy circumstances, but
their difficulty in pronouncing the English language
and other traits made their position far from easy'.

The story of Cheltenham ended, and in 1886 Alfred
went to Cambridge. The new chapter is interesting but
distressing. After three years it ended with a telegram
which he sent to his father—a telegram of two words—
'Ploughed: Alfred'.

CHAPTER VI

I

1886 **I**T would be foolish to seek for a prodigy in the story of Alfred Mond's life at Cambridge. The dons failed to see in the boy any promise of the mature man. As a conventional undergraduate Alfred was a definite failure, and not one of his contemporaries suspected that he would ever achieve even average success. Robert had already gone to Peterhouse, where Sir James Dewar was steering him through the labyrinth of natural science. Ludwig Mond sent Alfred to St John's, and here, in the incredible, new Gothic building on the other side of the Cam, he brought his possessions—most of them packs of cards, with which he set out to teach the undergraduates to play poker.

In the same year a set of medical students from Bart's had gone to John's, and they formed the Cartesian Club, which was frankly agnostic and shocking to almost every other undergraduate in the college. Their discussions were so violent and their life so sinister, in the eyes of true believers, that they were openly prayed for by the more devout members of the college. It was into this company that Alfred drifted, attracted by their medical knowledge and also by their frank agnosticism. At first he contributed little to their society.

It was a fashionable period for Cambridge and undergraduates were wearing smartly cut tweed suits, spats, and straw hats with their College colours. It was also the day of big billycock hats, with curled brims. The smartest men from Trinity walked across the market-

square with Maréchal Niel roses in their buttonholes. 1886
Alfred did not lend himself to these vanities. Indeed, he was so slovenly that he was given the paradoxical name of Beau Mond. Nor did he contribute new and exciting ideas to the meetings of the society. He would sit in silence while they discussed the triumph of science over religion, the power of intellectual truth over flimsy faith. When he had been in Cambridge for a month or two, he raised his voice. He spoke rarely, but when he did express an opinion, his eagerness caught the affection of his companions. He seemed to rationalise their arguments in a phrase: he would speak only when the others were lost in the tangle of their own ideas. Then he would suddenly present the tangle back to them, woven into a pattern of sense. In later years, this became one of his greatest qualities in conference. Although he spoke less than any of the others in the society, his personality was so dominant, that the company of intellectuals became known as the Mondites.

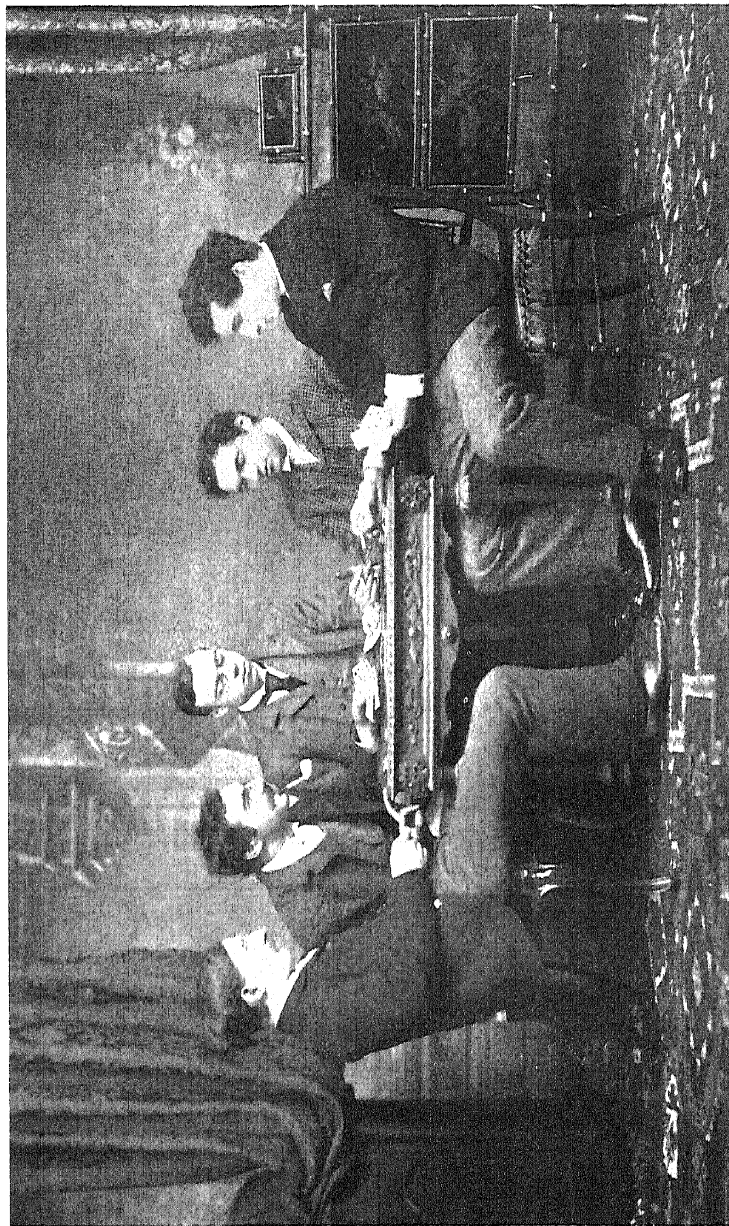
One man who was his friend at Cambridge recalls Alfred as being dark, with a heavy moustache. His clumsiness marked him as being different from his English friends. But to many of them this was attractive—there was something appealing about his incapable hands, his earnest efforts, his energy. More than this, talking to him was an adventure for them. University education was a tradition. They all did the things their fathers had done and they learned only as much as they were obliged to learn. But with Alfred, they heard of things that were new and strange. He talked of philosophy and made it palatable to them. He read verse and they were surprised to find that they under-

1886 stood it. His energy of mind made it impossible for him to be boring or merely ordinary.

In games, too, he surprised them. He would play tennis and golf worse than anybody they had ever seen. But suddenly he would make a shot or perform some feat which was amazing. It was as if his brain was so strong that any sudden spurts of energy lent his limbs and muscles a prowess which they did not possess. But he kept his best energies for the poker table. The tradition of good luck grew up about him—he enjoyed his reputation for winning, just as he did in later years, when he played in the South of France.

When Alfred went home on his first vacation, his father was able to observe the influence of Cambridge upon him. Ludwig was not wholly pleased. While Robert took his friends into a sitting room and played Bach to them, Alfred led his friends into another room and played poker. By this time, Ludwig and Frida Mond had bought a house in London—it was in Avenue Road, in St John's Wood, and it was called 'The Poplars'.

If Alfred felt any misgivings about his father's understanding of him, they did not prevent him from growing rich on the conversation and the interests of the new house in London. Many people still live to tell of the wonderful vitality and the breadth of the talk at 'The Poplars'. It was untouched by any social pretensions. The food and the wine were good, and Ludwig loved to sit at the head of a table and feel that his friends were being well fed. It was pride, not greed, which made him consider every wine, every dish, which came up from the kitchen, with almost scientific anxiety. Ludwig



A POKER-PARTY AT CAMBRIDGE.
Alfred Mond is the second figure from the left.

and Frida Mond came to look upon their cellar and 1886
their kitchen as they looked upon Ludwig's laboratory;
a place from which only perfect things might be allowed
to come. Beyond this indulgence, neither Dr Mond nor
his wife cared a fig for clothes or rank. Alfred never
heard gossip at the table. Neither Ludwig nor Frida
permitted or understood small talk. People stayed to
dine with them, invited at the last moment, because
they had talked on and on, after tea. Some would be
dressed and some would not. They would sit at table,
late into the night, talking of pictures and medicine,
politics and music. Thus it was that Alfred gathered a
kind of knowledge which would be strange in an
English public school boy. In later years, when he
approached his political life, he found that this home
education, the earnest and never meretricious atmo-
sphere created by his parents and their friends, gave him
deep knowledge in many subjects. Most Englishmen
approach politics as specialists in one aspect of public
life. Alfred had learned how to deal with workmen by
watching his father and the foremen at Winnington.
His knowledge of industry and economics was first
hand and original. He knew of pictures and music from
his home and from the tastes of his father and friends.
Once at Winnington, Max Bruch, the composer, was
Ludwig's guest, working in the daytime and playing to
them in the evening. At the same time, Jean Paul
Richter was staying with them, editing the literary work
of Leonardo da Vinci. Miss Herz was writing her
novel, *Alide*, in the same house. After dinner they
would sit in the Gallery. Max Bruch would play his
opera, *The Lorelei*, and his wife would sing, or Ludwig

1886 would join them and, with Frida, they would sing a Mendelssohn quartette. Alfred Mond's knowledge went deep, for he knew the technique of art: of how Rembrandt made a line or an effect. He lived through the excitement of seeing the first pictures bought for his father's collection. First, Sodoma's 'Madonna and Child holding a rose',¹ and then Fra Bartolomeo's 'Holy Family'.² He understood enough of science and medicine to be peculiarly well equipped when he became Minister of Health. Robert joined Alfred in his enthusiasm over medicine and surgery. Once, when they were at 'The Poplars', one of them discovered that his cousin had a sty in her eye. She adored Alfred and Robert, and with her, their word was law. They were still only about seventeen or eighteen. They decided that there was nothing for it but to operate. She was held in a chair and her eye-lid was lanced, and while the amateurs played dangerously with her eye, Alfred said, 'That is good, very good, and very interesting'.

When his young doctor friends came to see Alfred at 'The Poplars', they would talk around the table for an hour, and then they would withdraw from the family to play poker in an upper room, late into the night.

Sometimes, Ludwig would walk up and down, the tassel of his nightcap shaking and showing his agitation, regretting the difference in his sons. If he opened one door, he would hear the restrained calm of a Bach fugue; he would see Robert's friends sitting about the piano. When he opened the other door he saw the inevitable picture of Alfred with a fan of cards before

¹ Now in the collection of Sir Robert Mond.

² Now in the Mond Room at the National Gallery.

him. Again and again he would say, 'My God—Bach and Poker. They are different boys indeed'. 1886

II

In the summer vacation of his first year at Cambridge, Alfred went to walk in the Black Forest. From there he went to Bayreuth to hear his first Wagner opera. From this time his taste grew along his own chosen lines. At Winnington and in the new London house, Alfred had been taught to love the Italian painters. Now he bought Rembrandt etchings and Dürer engravings. This manifestation of his own, independent taste, was an important sign. It showed one of the fundamental differences between Ludwig and his son. Ludwig's dream was of a palace in Italy, filled with Italian masters. Alfred's taste was less Latin, for he liked the Dutch painters. For these his father had little affection. Alfred turned from his father's Italian Madonnas to the vigorous bourgeois of Rembrandt.

When he went to Bayreuth, Alfred took Wagner to his heart. In his home, he had heard his mother playing upon the virginal, an Italian virginal, painted with cupids and wreaths of flowers and little birds. He used to watch the tuner put in the raven quills, which plucked the wires. Wagner led Alfred away from the gentle music of his mother's taste. Still a boy he threw himself heart and soul into the new, vigorous music. He walked about the streets of Bayreuth entranced—he climbed the slope to the opera house, day after day; he listened to the trumpet sounding from the balcony; he stood outside the old house, and saw Cosima Wagner, like a figure escaped from Richard's own imagination. Alfred

1886 sat through *The Ring*, thrilled, like a boy on the edge of a new and uncharted country. All through his life the philosophy of Wagner held him and guided him. From the beginning he chose vigorous and muscular gods. Just as he loved Cromwell's courage and sometimes planned his life upon it—Cromwell, who had readmitted the Jews to England—so he applied Wagner's philosophy to problems and politics and economics. He came back to Winnington and then, day after day, Ludwig and Frida had to listen to him at the piano, singing Wolfram's Aria from *Tannhäuser*, 'O! DU MEIN HOLDER ABENDSTERN'. His fingers were as stiff as drum-sticks: he would sway from side to side at the piano, singing, in a gruff, tuneless voice. Again Ludwig walked up and down outside the room, saying, 'Oh God, Oh God. If he would only play poker. I like poker better than Wagner now'.

For a moment, it seemed, Alfred became a dreamer. Enthralled with his new discovery, he went back to Cambridge. The term ended: he had spent most of his time dreaming in the new Wagnerian world which he had discovered. When examination time came, with questions about prehistoric geology, he exasperated the examiners with a long description of the sunsets of the Carboniferous age.

By this time, Ludwig Mond was a rich man. He had done something new and strange in the world of science. He had developed physical chemistry in the great area of a works, instead of merely on the bench of a laboratory. He had brought science and the artisan close together, making one serve the other. It was his passion to save waste—his first experiments at the bench in

Cologne had been to recover ammonia from old boots. 1886
He wanted to save the nitrogen from coal and the sulphur from alkali waste. He wanted to take the guarded secrets of laboratories and use them for the common good. Through his process, England had cheaper soda and cheap soap. The effect on ordinary domestic hygiene and family health was colossal. As he saw these changes, he was almost contented. His life was not wasted.

CHAPTER VII

I

1882-1888 **E**XCITING changes had come to English life during the years of Ludwig's struggle at Winnington. When he had come from Cassel in the early 'sixties, the Victorian revival of trade had begun: the Prince Consort's faith in industry had penetrated into the lives of the people. Europe had blinded itself with the flash of swords, but Prince Albert had gently directed the Englishman's attention to the fruits of industry. They had learned the lesson of his Crystal Palace obediently and well. It was significant that an exhibition of craftsmanship and machines should rise above the green pastures of Hyde Park, for the time had come when industry was to rise and flourish and agriculture was to fade away.

The old aristocracy was slowly passing—the dandies had long ago fled from Hyde Park, and people of the new, prosperous middle-class pressed against the railing of Rotten Row, to watch the plump Royal children riding by. Workers and peasants came up easily from the provinces in the new trains, and London was no longer merely a legend to them. Such was the scene when Ludwig first came to England in 1862. It was a time when farmers were looking anxiously over their impoverished lands. The agricultural depression was coming slowly, and when Winnington was built, ten years afterwards, industry had risen gloriously to take its place. Thousands of Englishmen had gone to California and to Australia, and the gold they found in the

new earth was coming back to England and spreading itself more evenly among the people. 1882-1888

In 1800, the whole wealth of the country had been two hundred and forty million pounds. In 1881, the national wealth had increased to one thousand, three hundred millions. The bulk of the increase had gone to the middle and working classes. In return for the gold they sent back to the parent England, the Australians imported fifteen million pounds worth of goods in one year.

The industrial revival had set in and the calm earth of England, for so long accustomed to the plough and the slow, laborious peasant, suddenly saw slim chimneys rising at the edge of the fields. Men quickened their pace and learned the lessons of industry from the efficient machines. The talk in the inns had been of crops and beasts, but now it had changed. Men were discarding the smocks of husbandry. They talked of the magic inventions of their industrial masters and of great towers, packed tight with machinery.

Ludwig Mond was deeply concerned in these changes. Twenty years before he went to Winnington, the Preston strike had warned England of what was to be—it was the first significant struggle between capital and labour. The poor had at last been given the right to live. They had seen the gibbet swept away from the Queen's highway, so that even murderers might die decently and in privacy. They had seen their emaciated and dull-witted children, who were sent to work in the factories almost as soon as they could speak, look up from their benches to hear their elders talk of schools. They had seen their pallid little boys brought up out of the dark mines, to be taught arithmetic.

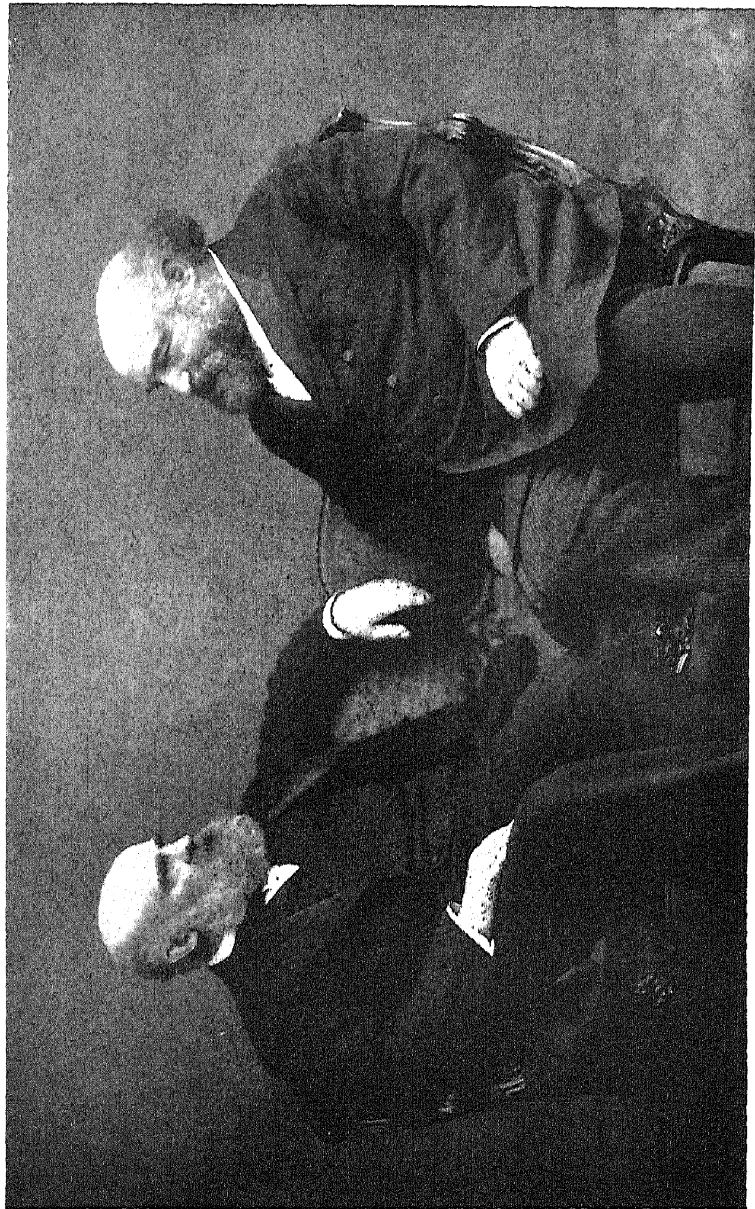
1882-1888 Ludwig Mond and John Brunner were magnificent pioneers in all the changes of the time, carrying their workmen with them on the road to prosperity, pouring their profits back into Winnington and making their community so happy in the new conditions that Mond and Brunner became examples to the industrialists of England.

II

When Ludwig was a boy, in Cassel, he had talked to Henriette Mond of his dreams—of the great works he wanted to build, and of how he wished to become ‘the ideal of a captain of industry’. The phrase was his own, and when he was settled in England, his mother wrote and reminded him of his young promise, that he would ‘prepare and educate workmen, and care for them; that they should have a pleasant and comfortable home’.

‘What do you think now?’ she wrote to him, when he sat in ‘The Hollies’ with the plans of Winnington before him.

He was able to answer her well. He never moved away from his young ideal, and in 1884 he astonished the other industrialists of England by giving his workmen an annual holiday of one week, on full pay. It was required that the men should qualify for their holiday by good service, and in the first year, forty-two per cent. of the workmen set off to what was a fantastic and new experience in their lives—seven days of lazy ease, beside the sea. Princes no longer went to Brighton. The Regent’s pavilion was shorn of its glory and boarding-houses had sprung up in long lines. Brighton and Margate and Ramsgate became the playgrounds of people



JOHN BRUNNER AND LUDWIG MOND.

Alfred Mond

1882-1888 figure gave the corner of Cheshire a touch of beauty which was not expected of machines, gaunt chimneys and barges full of casks and sacks.

III

1885-1887 When Alfred went to Winnington for his holidays, one of his delights was to walk in the garden, where John Brunner tended his beloved roses. The interests of his father's partner had grown far beyond Winnington by now. While Ludwig worked in the laboratory at night, John Brunner spent his evenings over plans for education. In 1885 he built a school at Winnington and then he founded a High School for girls. In later years he endowed the Chairs of Economics, Physical Chemistry, and Egyptology at Liverpool. In 1885 he was elected to Parliament.

The two brave, unknown men, who walked from Farnworth to Winnington thirteen years before, saw prosperity spread over their land and honour come to their door. The chimneys which Cheshire had feared and resented were a blessing to the earth. The farm labourers who were obliged to leave their ploughs to rust in their sheds because of the agricultural depression, came to the gates of Winnington and found work.

Now that he was in Parliament, John Brunner was able to open up a new world to Alfred when he walked with him. He had sat in the House and he had shaken hands with Lord Salisbury. He had heard the vote of censure proposed in Parliament, when the terrible story of General Gordon and the fanatical Arabs who killed him came from Khartoum.

Alfred was entranced by the gossip of Westminster,

the pictures of the great men who ruled the country, the 1885-1887
ideals that flourished among the young politicians and
the dangerous excitement of elections. Alfred would
waylay John Brunner almost every time the older man
set out from the Hall, and then, walking through the
great buildings of the works, or in the grand new offices
which had just been built, he would bombard him with
questions. He saw the changes his father and Brunner
had made at Winnington—he saw them lay the founda-
tion-stones of new schools and he watched the men
grow happy and healthy with the blessing of more
leisure, more air and more light. While John Brunner
worked at Westminster, Mond came to increasing
honour among scientists, and again this year, he ad-
dressed the Society of Chemical Industry as President.
His own words define his attitude of mind towards
science more truly than any attempt of a biographer.
He said on that occasion:

The statement is frequently made that 'Necessity is the
mother of Invention'. If this has been the case in the past,
I think it is no longer so in our days.... We can now foresee, in
most cases, in what direction progress in technology will move,
and, in consequence, the inventor is now frequently in advance
of the wants of his time. He may even create new wants, to my
mind a distinct step in the development of human culture. It
can then no longer be stated that 'Necessity is the mother of
Invention'; but I think it may truly be said that the *steady
methodical investigation of natural phenomena is the father of
industrial progress.*

Alfred wove his first great dream: he saw the rela-
tions of master and man—the relations of industry and
capital—changing, so that it seemed that the age of

1885-1887 industry might also be an age of industrial peace. The Liberal idea was forming itself in his brain. He saw a Tory Government, lazy and complacent, slowly being menaced by the fresh energy of the Industrialists and the workmen whose standard of living had been raised, in spite of the Government rather than through them. Alfred talked to Brunner, more and more, of the theories and ideas which had been tumbling in his brain during the last year at Cambridge. He listened to T. P. O'Connor when he came to Winnington to help John Brunner in his electioneering. He saw the harvest growing from the seeds which Brunner and his father had sown in Winnington, but he wanted to see that harvest spreading over all the earth. He talked to Brunner of the great political changes which were essential before this could be: before politics, now become so slow-footed, could catch up with industry.

Alfred's voice was harsh with a heavy accent and his hands were clumsy. He knew this, and yet the dream persisted. Once, after such a walk with Brunner, he hurried off to see his aunts in Cologne. Again he sat at the piano and sang 'O! du mein holder Abendstern'.

His German aunts and his cousins sat around the room. They had not seen him for a year, and they were full of questions. When he stopped singing, his aunt asked, 'Alfred, have you made up your mind what you are going to do—what you are going to be?'

He turned around on the piano stool and said, 'I am going to be Prime Minister of England'.

IV

Ludwig went to see Alfred during his last term at Cambridge. They walked along the Backs together, Ludwig still wearing his long, black coat, and his black hat. Alfred took him into the old courts of the colleges, and, remembering Heidelberg, Ludwig enjoyed all he saw. They paused in the Great Court of Trinity, to listen to the trickling water of the fountain. They looked up into the soaring arches of the roof of King's. In the evening, after Ludwig had dined with Alfred in his rooms, they walked along the cloister of John's and out to the river again. The Cam moved past slowly at their feet. It was a warm evening and two or three boats were still out on the water. Ludwig listened to the nightingale, and, finding himself thus upon earth which was new to him, away from the drudgery of Winnington and the conventions of the family circle, he talked of Heidelberg and came to understand Alfred a little more. It was not that they were antagonised so much as that they were different. Alfred had come to love English life more and more, but his father had remained a German. Even in John's, which was a less opulent college than Trinity, there were glimpses of the immaculate English picture—the landed gentry, the rigid social system which had withstood ravages by which the bulwarks of European society were destroyed. Alfred admired the strength and the very prejudices which stood against him in that society. He admired the solid English character, which saved Englishmen from making mistakes, and the natural slowness which allowed national dangers to pass them by before they

1885-1887 could grasp them. By some curious twist of nature, the German culture had been drained out of Alfred, and although the Jewish instincts remained, they readily attuned themselves to the English theme. It was in this that Alfred was different from his father.

After they parted, there were little notes from his father—Ludwig recalled the nightingales again and again. From the noise of Winnington or the quiet, warm rooms of his London house, he would write, 'I should like to hear the nightingales in Cambridge now'.

Alfred was ploughed in the Science Tripos, and from hearing the nightingales beside the Cam, he went to Edinburgh University, to try to patch up his mistakes. He found rooms within sight of the castle, he hung his Rembrandt etchings upon the wall; he locked his poker cards away and then he tried once more to be a scholar.

V

When he came south again, Alfred was a boy no longer. The gawkiness of boyhood left him, and he stood upon his own feet, resolute and brave. He always said that in his few months in Edinburgh he learned more than in all his three years at Cambridge. Perhaps it was that his shapeless thoughts of Cambridge needed the severity of Edinburgh to give them form. When he went back to Winnington he took his place in conversation after dinner. Ludwig looked up to find that the ugly duckling had strengthened its wings. Like his father, like his brother, and like the son who was to follow him, he would stamp up and down the room during the

process of thought. 'The Monds always talk like that', 1889
one is told. When Ludwig, Alfred and Robert were in
a room together, they would parade up and down,
walking, walking, bumping into the furniture, seen but
mistily through thick cigar smoke.

At twenty-two, Alfred stamped up and down the
long gallery at Winnington, deploring the incom-
petence of the men who governed the world. John
Brunner was at hand to spur him on. Brunner was a
strong Radical, but a little Englishman, whose limitations
had scant charm for Alfred. Yet Alfred was eager to
learn. In those early twenties, he developed his charac-
teristics of manner and speech—the passing of his hand
across his face when he was perplexed, the growling,
harsh voice, which gave his speech a bitterness which
was not in his heart, the endless tramping up and down
the floor, until people who were in the room with him
were so unnerved that his arguments lost a little of their
power.

He made his first speech in the Liberal Club at
Widnes. It was then that he threatened to throw a man
out of the hall if he did not listen quietly. Yet he was
shy, and he looked down at the table as he spoke. He
was engrossed by the process of his own thought, and
not by the tricks of elocution and the dramatic possi-
bilities of eyes and speech. He knew that his voice was
unbeautiful; he knew that nature had not endowed him
richly with the superficial trappings of a public man.
He had rich, dark eyes, flaming with the power within
him. But the power had to be searched for. At first glance,
he was an unattractive man. He knew this. He knew
that his success must be achieved with miracles of per-

1889 sonal strength. He had no gallant smile with which to smooth a hard word and no gentle inflections of speech to sugar the pills of his thought. He knew that England would open its Parliament, nay its House of Lords—even the Queen's ear, to a Jew who could enrich the country. But the solid and excellently virtuous upper classes of England would not dream those privileges sufficient reason for admitting a Jew within their houses.

To the passer-by, Alfred was also a German. He had the example of the Prince Consort if he sought to know exactly what English people thought of any misfortunate being who was born on the other side of the Channel. It had been said that the reason why the English were so slow to accept the story of Bethlehem was that they could not believe it possible that God would have chosen any place but Devon or Northumberland or Norfolk for the Holy Land. No, England was willing to be governed by Germans and Jews, but it would not take this as a sign that certain social barriers should be broken down. This was in the day when the Prince of Wales was shocking the ancient divisions of English society by being entertained by the New Industrialists. The tyrannies of the Russian aristocrats were nothing to the tyrannies of an English hostess once she had an invitation list and a blue pencil in her hands.

Alfred had been made to feel these things at Cambridge. He was a Jew, although his father had not confirmed him in this or any faith. German blood still twisted his fair English phrases.

But other Jews were winning their laurels. A Jew

won the Derby in 1871. A Jew had lent England 1889 the money with which to buy the Suez Canal. When Lionel Rothschild's daughter was married, one of the speeches made at the feast was so fine that it was adopted at Eton, to be translated into Attic prose, for the Newcastle Medal. Jewish boys were being admitted to Eton. And then there was always the example of Disraeli to comfort him. Alfred Mond read the novels of the great Victorian again and, strengthened by his example, he found himself able to raise his voice in argument. His determination and courage became tremendous.

One night at Winnington, when his mother had left the dining-room, Alfred found himself alone with his father and three or four other men, much older than himself.

It was a pleasant setting in which a boy might declare his purpose.

The long dining-room was lit by candles; the Adam panels were outlined with peaceful and perfect lines and subdued decoration. The old butler moved about in the shadows, with soft slippers. The table was still covered by the litter of a good dinner.

Alfred fingered his brandy glass—he pushed it forward and then he drew it towards him again.

‘I am going into politics’, he announced.

Ludwig thumped his great hands down upon the arms of his chair. ‘Oh, the rough and tumble of politics’, he said, and then he snapped out his brisk question.

‘What party?’

‘Liberal’, answered Alfred.

1889 'Why?' asked his father.

Alfred's new strength made it possible for him to answer his father now, but he answered with his tongue in his cheek. 'I have chosen them because I have examined all the parties and I find that there are less clever men among the Liberals than any other.'

CHAPTER VIII

I

WHEN Dr Mond was looking for a house in St John's Wood, he insisted upon three conditions. 1889
It was to have a garden so big that he could walk up and down, smoking his cigar and dreaming his dreams. It was to be near to Euston Station, so that he could always go to Winnington without trouble. He loved the works with all his heart. He required also that the foundations should be such that the house should be dry enough to house old masters.

Some time before, he had bought the pictures which were the beginning of his collection. In 1892 he bought a Raphael and a Titian at the Dudley sale in London.¹

The industrial revival had bred a new company of English millionaires who wished to spend their money upon great houses, so there was a reshuffling of the art treasures of the country. The majority of the new rich men had not got Ludwig Mond's knowledge or tradition. They found their interest in contemporary painters, so they went to the studios and not to the auction-rooms for their pictures. They bought Leightons and Tadmans and hung them upon the red walls of their dining-rooms. A year before the Great Exhibition, a Raphael had been sold for two hundred and fifty pounds. As late as 1876 a Gainsborough was put up for auction and it fetched

¹ The Raphael, now in the National Gallery, was bought for £11,130, then the highest price ever paid for a picture in an English public auction, and the Titian, also in the National Gallery, was bought for £2500.

1889 only three hundred and sixty-seven pounds. The Prince Consort had been able to buy his collection of primitives for a mere song. Now that the great industrialists were building their houses, the market was changed. The excitement with which they had built up their fortunes was carried into the auction-rooms, to barter for Gainsboroughs and Romneys and Rembrandts. The result was that prices flew to fabulous heights. Eleven years after the dismal sale of a Gainsborough for three hundred and sixty-seven pounds, his picture, 'The Two Sisters', was sold for almost seven thousand pounds. Ludwig and Frida Mond approached their purchases in a less material way. They had been nurtured in the romantic school which had risen in the wake of Goethe. Goethe had shed a radiance over their lives, even in Cheshire. When his inventions drew Ludwig more and more into his laboratory, his wife and Miss Herz were always waiting for him in the quiet of his home, to remind him of the little landing in the house at Cassel, and of the culture which was a treasure to be found in a small town in Germany, but seldom in England. One of the first delights that came to them with their money was in being able to go to Italy and see the pages of their beloved Goethe come to life. In 1884 they had come to live in London. Now they went as far as Florence, where they stayed for three winters. But Ludwig was still dissatisfied, and not until the fourth winter, when he went to Rome, did he discover his full happiness. He could stand in the square before St Peter's, with the splashing fountains; he could ascend the steps with the pilgrims; he could stand back and watch them kissing the feet of the saint. He could feel

the whole weight of twenty-seven centuries of history 1889
pressing in about him. Byron's 'Grandeur and decadence, ruin and beauty', made the aggravations of Winnington seem to be no more than a distant, half-remembered noise. Ludwig could stand in the hall of the Pantheon and watch the light bursting through the open dome. Like Byron, he could walk upon the Palatine, 'whilst the night-birds hooted to each other amid the ivyclad ruins of what once had been the palace of the Emperors'.

One day Ludwig climbed the Spanish steps, pausing to buy Frida some anemones in the flower market at the foot. They walked up together and, standing near the summit, they turned to look back over Rome. There was a lazy warmth about the life near them: a dolorous ease which gave no heed to time and machines. A guide whispered, 'Down there is the house in which the English poet Keats died'. At the top of the steps they walked a little way and found themselves before a house which looked, Ludwig said to Frida, as if it had always been waiting for them. It was empty and quiet. It was the house which Zuccari had built with the money he brought back after painting Elizabeth and her Court in England. The frescoes he had painted were still upon the walls. The palazzo was set upon the sharp corner of the Via Gregoriana and the Via Sistina, and from its higher windows and the balcony they could look over the pink and yellow walls, the straight lines of the brown roofs, towards the arched dome of St Peter's, radiant, against a blue sky. This was to be their home in Italy. They bought it eagerly, like children. They would not buy all their pictures in the stuffy

1889 London auction-rooms. Here, escaping for a little time every year, they would gather together all the beautiful things they could find.

II

When Alfred came south from Edinburgh, he went to his father's palazzo in Rome, for a holiday. He had been ill with pneumonia during the last weeks in Edinburgh and, lying in his bed, passing out of the fever into the calm of convalescence, he had been able to sort out his tumbled ideas. The sorting gave him nothing but dissatisfaction. He did not want to work at Winnington. He wanted his own achievement, separate from his father's work and built with his own strength.

He came to Rome when the city was excited by new discoveries. Not so very long before, cattle had been grazing among the broken columns of the forum. Now the archaeologists and scholars had come to dig the remnants of the ancient glory out of the earth again. Eager spades were digging, down and down, bringing great porphyry columns out of the darkness, finding the pavements upon which the vestal virgins had driven, discovering the ways by which Horace had walked, in the shadow of cypresses and olive trees.

Alfred was awed into a great silence. Here was something terrible, reaching back into the deep shadows of time. He watched them bring up beautiful vessels out of the earth and hold them before the eyes of the young Romans. He read Macaulay. Walking with his new friends, he went out of the city to see the sun rising over the Campagna. The tall, masculine cypresses

swayed against the sky. The feminine olives, full of 1889
grey-blue light, moved gently, above clumps of blue
irises, and grass, smeared with wild violets.

He came to know Hadrian's villa at Tivoli. He walked among the ruins and he restored them in his imagination. Gradually all his thoughts and life took shape. The pillars were broken and the pavements had been stripped of their marble. The material glory of the villa was gone. But Hadrian's majesty had filled the vast rooms and the courts: he had given them a power which defied material decay. Where were the schoolmasters of England now? Training a boy to a pattern, killing his personal courage, teaching him to respect intellectual and social laws and allowing the vast, spiritual laws to be forgotten. Hadrian, Roman and pagan: of an age when men were big and brave, never allowing their morals and ethics to deteriorate into being the social taboos of Alfred's own civilisation. Here were no phlegmatic Englishmen feeding tomtits upon their lawns. Here were men who would go into the hills and catch eagles with their hands.

Alfred walked into the maritime theatre, where, in scattered corners, there still were little pieces of pink and green marble to aid him in building up his picture. The cracked columns were whole again. They met in delicate cornices; the paving-stones were pink marble, the walls of green marble. The symphony of marble circles was complete again, curve crossing curve, all leading to the central circle of clear water, water which was as still as the blue sky from which it took its colour: except when some Roman boy or girl rose up to the surface, naked and lissom, to rest wet,

1889 brown hands upon the edge of the marble basin. The sun burned down, the eucalyptus and the mimosa scented the air. Life was rich and brave. Hadrian would walk out of the villa, an old man with the ghosts of far places haunting his eyes. He had built a wall in Scotland—that poor country. England was no more to Rome then than Tasmania is to England now. A place of barbarians, blessed only because Colchester produced oysters which could be carried across Europe for Hadrian's pleasure, in sacks of snow. He had been to Germany and Gaul and Spain and Mauretania and Africa. He was an Empire builder, with muscle and guts and a sense of beauty.

Alfred had found the past. The vastness of time spread out before him. He went to the hall of philosophers. The great arch of stone was there, but the roof had gone and the hall was open and broken, yawning to the blue sky. Alfred's fancy brought the philosophers back again. Law! That had been the basis of their government. Men wise enough to make good laws, but, also, men strong enough to enforce them. Here were no puny professors, writing down laws with hands so weak they could never demand obedience to them. This, he said, was to be the way by which he would approach his final achievement. Law was the highroad to politics and politics was the mighty machinery of government.

Alfred walked on to the terrace and spread out his arms. He felt his own growth warming his body, lifting him from the nebulous confusion in which he had blundered for so long.

Then he went back to the central court, where

Hadrian had dallied in the autumn of his rule. He 1889
thought of the vast span of the ages, civilisation following civilisation. Alfred himself contemplating the tumbled stones of Hadrian's villa. Macaulay's New Zealander watching the ruins of St Paul's. And in all this colossal procession he was a being, a man, with a brain, a soul and a body. With his brain he could learn the ways of men and make laws to help them. With his body he could take his place in the actual physical continuity of the race. Caesar following Caesar, young following old, the baby playing with the white beard of its grandfather, an endless procession of human beings, while their material temples tumbled to dust about them; while their cities fell down and gave themselves back to the earth from which they were hewn.

The whole psychological and physiological mystery of sex seemed to rise about him here, where the marble had been warm from the bodies which were pressed against it, where love had been free and courageous, with no hypocrisy and respectability to taint it with superstitions which God never intended. Alfred Mond peopled the marble terrace with Hadrian's court. The Romans were not twisted and pallid like the people of to-day. They kept their bodies glorious and healthy, they ran, they captured, they loved with the same eagerness which sent them into battle; with the same beauty which made them fill their courts with statues and their memories with poems. Rome; where poets were also men; where soldiers wrote verses and loved beauty.

Full of this realisation, this emancipation from the respectability and narrowness of English thought, he

1889 went back to Rome. He crossed the Campagna, leaving the ruin of Hadrian's glory upon the Tivoli hill.

Excited by the sudden knowledge that he was one in this great procession of time, this mystery of propagation, he realised, he wrote, that here, at last, was a point where his intellect pierced his personal emotions. The close association of the creative and reproductive functions of man impressed him. He had the dominant desire to create, and, with a delight over all beauty that was sensual and deeply emotional, he turned to books to find out facts which would explain the laws behind the mystery.

And then, from the dream of Hadrian's court, the realisation of his own individual place in the procession of propagation, his own emotional delight over the beauty of the new knowledge, he contemplated his own body with terror. In later years he said, 'During that time, I vowed that I would never marry, because I felt my own physical defects so deeply that I would not have dared to take advantage of my inheritance as a man, I would not have dared to marry; I would not have dared to perpetuate my defects in a child'.

Yet he became a great and good father, and somebody remembers him, sitting before his daughter when she was nursing her baby. They have since said, 'I watched his face, as the little mouth fumbled for the mother's breast, and there was an expression in his face which had a touch of divinity'.

III

With Alfred Mond, knowledge and emotion, law and pleasure, government and aesthetic beauty were one

happy family. He used the one to nurture the other. The historical sense which awakened in him at Tivoli had led to his own emotional self-realisation. His realisation of this deep, personal truth drew his already keen interests closer to art. Among the many sculptures he came to know so well were marble figures dug from the earth about Hadrian's villa. These were the very people who had run and laughed and ate and quarrelled and loved, as humanly as Alfred's own contemporaries. He went to the galleries and museums and, looking upon the faces of Sabina and Antinous, the pagan picture became more and more real to him. It was in this way that he approached art; through human interest and appreciation: not through any affectations of taste or of knowledge, worn self-consciously.

IV

In Edinburgh, Mond had bought copies of the Mantegna frescoes of the Triumph of Caesar, and he had found a little Turner in an auction-room. It was a landscape of Schandau on the Elbe, full of grey-golden light. Wherever he went, to the end of his life, it was hung in or near his room. When he came to Rome, he found the first unself-conscious way of meeting contemporary painters as well as seeing ancient sculpture and pictures.

There had been a strained anxiety about his intellectual development up to this time. But now he was able to use the raw material of his learning, and design his own judgments. He evolved his own tastes.

Alfred read the odes of Horace upon the ground where they were written. With the scene, the light, the spirit of Rome enlivening his days, he would sit upon

1889 his father's balcony, glancing up, now and then, towards the dome of St Peter's. Horace whispered to him, 'Youth and beauty fly swift away...why, *therefore*, do you fatigue your mind, unequal to eternal projects? Why do we not *rather* (while it is in our power), thus carelessly reclining under a lofty plane-tree, or this pine, with our locks made fragrant by roses, and anointed with Syrian perfume, indulge ourselves with generous wine'.

Life and beauty warmed Alfred's blood. With the sweet temptations of Horace ringing in his ears, he went to the studios and met artists and dined with them. He wrote few letters, but there were some secret verses in which he revealed the wistful trend of his development. When he had written them, he locked them away in a box. He made many friends, but no Maecenas had yet come forward to sustain him in his journey.

Ludwig gathered the great artists and archaeologists into the palazzo. When he came in 1891 he had all the glamour of being a Fellow of the Royal Society to attract new tributes from the Roman scholars. His was a wonderful house for entertaining. Its history lent colour to the new life within its walls. The Queen Maria of Portugal had lived here. Goethe had stayed in the palazzo: the Mond's neighbour, D'Annunzio, walked across the Via Sistina to talk to Frida Mond about poetry and philosophy. Eleonora Duse came to sit with them in the afternoon. Siegfried Wagner became their friend and he stayed at the palazzo when he came to Rome. Each summer, Alfred came to know Rome better and better. He watched the young sculptors at work and came to understand the methods and history of their art. He searched back into the past and, moving

from the Roman tradition to the work of the Middle Ages, and through the blossoming of the Renaissance, he came to study the age of Rodin. Untrammelled by prejudice, Alfred gathered his knowledge from a wide field. All that he learned was touched with the romance which his own imagination gave to facts. More than seventy years before, Byron had been here; he had stood in the Colosseum, watching the stars as they 'quivered up through those arches, fringed with wild flowers'; he had dined with Lansdowne, who was collecting his marbles, just as Ludwig was doing now. Here Byron had paused to plan his fourth Canto of *The Childe Harold*. In the cool evening Alfred walked through the streets and gardens, and then, taking the spirit of so much beauty into himself, he went back to the house and, moving from room to room, he saw the treasures which his father had bought. The walls of the palazzo shone with Paul Veronese, Liberale da Verona and Correggio. There were Titians and a Tintoretto, and a Filippo Lippi, so lovely, that students came from all over Rome, begging Ludwig to allow them to see it.

In music, too, Alfred learned so much and he learned so securely that, within three years, masters themselves were delighted to talk to him, and were amazed by what he told them. His father engaged orchestras to come and play to them in the garden. Alfred seemed to be able to saturate himself in all subjects and then, taking the varied knowledge into his own judgment, he was soon able to explain and see the links between sculpture and music and painting, relationships which the artists themselves did not always comprehend.

Intellectually, Alfred had grown far beyond his time

1889 and far beyond his years. But still, in his personal life, he was immature and lonely, and he was not able to use his knowledge for any constructive purpose.

v

Alfred Mond came back to England and to his rooms in the Inner Temple. People who remember him at this time recall his sitting-room, the Mantegna frescoes upon the wall, the divan draped in the pretty way of the time, and Alfred sitting beside the window, looking out over London, towards the dome of St Paul's. He liked to sit thus, remembering the other dome, which he saw when he dreamed upon the balcony of his father's palazzo.

About this time he went to a performance of the *Merchant of Venice*, and he realised that Shylock was the comparatively honourable man of the play, but that the whole tradition of the theatre and of English thought had regarded him as the black-hearted villain. He saw that English people would forgive the infidelity, the duplicity and the sham of the other characters Shakespeare had made, all because their victim was a Jew. Again and again he pointed to this as a curious indication of the weight under which his race was obliged to suffer in public judgment.

If these years were nebulous so far as action is concerned, it is certain that Alfred Mond prepared his mind and stocked it with knowledge upon almost every subject. Even his legal work had only a faint hold upon him. He said that law was 'a sterile and uncreative occupation'. Again and again he said, 'Law is the high-road to politics'. From one of his windows he could see Westminster.

Knowledge was of little interest to him for its own sake. He plucked theories and ideas from the past; history taught him to think for himself. He wanted to correct the errors of the world, but his method was to be vigorous. Caution and convention exasperated him: he did not like the warmth of velvet gloves. Carlyle and Milton and Rembrandt were to be his companions. He pledged himself to the Roundheads and not to the Cavaliers. 1889

Alfred's brain was coldly rational. He was free of humbug, and no matter what public opinion may say, he was then, and in all his years, free of mean or mercenary ambitions.

When he was twenty-three, Alfred had progressed far in his studies, but he had disappointed his father by refusing to work at Winnington. For many months he had worked there. In the laboratories, in the workshops and in the offices, he had learned the intricacies of his father's business. But Alfred Mond wished to make his own life and his own name, independent of the achievement of Winnington. The strength of this decision never lessened, and when, as an older man, he was obliged to choose the title of his peerage, he said, 'I don't want the name of Mond. That was my father's name. He made it great. I want my own name'. And he chose the name of Melchett.

The experience at Winnington was not wasted. He acquired fresh knowledge to aid him on the way to becoming a great thinker. But that knowledge was stored away, remote from his actions and his self-expression, as a locked library might be remote from a man who possesses no key.

CHAPTER IX

I

1892 **T**HE Palazzo Zuccari had become a lively centre for Roman scholars. Aided by Dr Richter, Ludwig Mond had made a distinguished collection of Venetian and Veronese pictures. The house was a delight, not only to Ludwig's own family and to Roman students, but also to deserving young Englishmen who left their grey country, to study in Italian schools.

Letters of introduction to Ludwig or Miss Herz were coveted among English scholars.

One day, an eager and happy young man named Sigismund Goetze jumped into a London hansom to begin his journey to Rome. He was the son of a family which had been brought up to hear good music and know eminent painters. His father was a coffee merchant in Mincing Lane; his mother was so considerable as a musician that she had played the pianoforte at the Philharmonic Concerts when she was quite a young girl. Sigismund Goetze had already blossomed beneath the rays of Alma Tadema's encouragement.

Just as he stepped into the hansom, a friend ran up to him with a letter. 'This will introduce you to Ludwig Mond...you must know the Mondes. They have a lovely palazzo in Rome.'

Sigismund Goetze wanted nothing less. Hedged in by the life of the artistic colony in St John's Wood, he had dreamed of the freedom of a student's life with its inexpensive delights. So it was that when he came to Rome he waited many days before he climbed the

Spanish steps, spurred on by mere politeness, to slip the letter under the Mond door and trust that nothing would come of it. Just as he turned away, the door opened and Ludwig Mond stood in front of him, in his long black coat and his wide black hat. 1892

II

The Monds and the Goetzes became friends. The two families met again in London. There were tennis parties at which Sigismund's sister appeared. Her name was Violet, and she was very pretty. She had also an astonishing personality, and she was destined, by virtue of her character, her vigour and her social gifts, to encourage and succour a great man on his way to success.

After a little time Alfred also went to the tennis parties. Violet Goetze would sing Schumann lieder for Alfred, and songs by Dvořák. Or they would play tennis, a sedate and quiet game in which she held up her beautiful dress with one hand, hitting the ball gently with the other.

Sometimes Miss Goetze went to 'The Poplars'. Her spontaneity and brightness were new to the dark and serious house. Ludwig would sit there, day after day, proud of the deference which his relations brought to him, as a great patriarch, but perhaps a little bored when the deference dragged on without one humorous interlude. Violet Goetze stabbed the shadows of 'The Poplars' like a ray of light. She sang to Ludwig, she joked with him, she came, in her pale dresses and her flowered hats, completely unlike any of the soberly dressed women to whom Ludwig was accustomed. Frida and

1892 Miss Herz wore black and dark blue; they walked sedately and talked quietly. Violet Goetze would run into the house, she would contradict Ludwig when she did not agree with him, she would sing for him and she would entrance him so happily that he would rise from his chair and cross the room to thank her. Her candour disarmed him. When she woke in the morning at Winnington, she found that her windows looked out upon different scenes: the one over a landscape of trees and distance, the other over the grim and uninteresting buildings of the works. She drew the blind on the second scene and announced the fact to her future father-in-law at breakfast. Ludwig Mond became angry and he rebuked her. 'Those works are my life work and your bread and butter', he said. His love for the works was almost devout. Once somebody painted them in a series of pictures. The artist had discovered the aesthetic possibilities of chimneys and smoke, so he used them freely. Dr Mond could not consider the aesthetic qualities of the pictures. All he said was 'Smoke, my God, smoke! And I have spent my life in trying to remove all the smoke from my works. Take them away'.

In March of 1892 Robert and Alfred joined the Goetzes at Cannes. When Alfred arrived at the hotel, he wore violets in his buttonhole. Miss Goetze's name was Violet. The courtier was struggling inside the Roundhead's armour.

Cannes was fresh and beautiful with spring flowers. In the daytime, they walked together. In the evening, they went to the casino, and one night, Miss Goetze stood behind Alfred as he played, and whispered lucky

numbers in his ear. 'That's right,' said a stranger beside 1892
them, 'always take your wife's advice.'

Alfred was still very shy. He waited until almost the last day before he told Miss Goetze that he loved her. Then, when he was on the way to Rome, he suddenly realised that he had forgotten, in the violent declaration of his feelings, to ask her to marry him. They had walked down an avenue on the last day and the ground was covered with the yellow snow of the mimosa. When Alfred received her reply, at the Palazzo Zuccari, a little bunch of pressed mimosa fell out of the envelope, into his hand.

Love loosened all Alfred's stored-up chivalry. The almost disgruntled voice played with song. When he went to his window in the morning, he could see their neighbour D'Annunzio, walking up and down before the window in his dressing-gown. Alfred himself noured his love into verse. The letters he wrote have been kept in a bundle. They show a strange and almost magical figure coming out of the shy, silent boyhood of which we have learned. Majestic phrases fell from his pen; tender album verses were written, in almost illegible writing at the foot of the last page of his letter. But he was deeply humble about his happiness. 'There is every reason why a man should love one so beautiful as you, but none why a woman should love me.'

He went from Rome to Cologne to tell his grandfather the exciting news. He wrote to Miss Goetze that when they asked him questions, he merely said 'I am going to marry the most beautiful woman in the world, and everybody envies me'. Then he added, 'But how are you going to defend your action in marrying me?'

1892 He came back to London and he carried his news to his friends in the Inner Temple. They gathered about him. They looked at him 'In an astonished doubting way, as if they couldn't quite take the idea in'.

In June, Alfred Mond was married at St Mark's, in Hamilton Terrace, by Canon Duckworth of Westminster. They stood beneath a memorial window to Miss Goetze's father, on the north side of the chancel. He had been a devout man and he had placed the window in the church as a thankoffering for his recovery after a long illness. But he had died before it was finished, so that it became his memorial instead. There had been one anxiety for Alfred before the wedding. Canon Duckworth discovered that Alfred was neither a confessed Jew nor Christian, and he said that he was afraid that he could not perform the ceremony. Alfred went to see him, and so subtle was his power of persuasion and so convincing were his arguments that the Canon said 'Yes'.

CHAPTER X

I

THE career of many a gifted man has been frustrated or weakened by marriage. The first fine vigour of youth is nonplussed when it finds that it must divide itself between a career and a home: two interests which are very often opposed. 1893

From the beginning, marriage was a blessing to Alfred Mond. Up to this time, he had been without responsibility. He had had no need to think of money and all the people about him were independent of him. He went his own way, with none but his father's shadow to influence him in his development.

Now he was blessed with responsibilities, and through them, his courage grew to strength, his intellect resolved itself into action. Within a year there was a baby daughter, so weak that Alfred was stirred by fear and anxiety. His wife had awakened to find him standing beside the bed, with the baby in his arms. Mrs Mond was ill: again and again he was obliged to carry her upstairs to her room. At last he was necessary to two people, and, with his self-respect thus established, he looked about the world with an eye to conquest.

There was one little incident which seems to show the beginning of the change in him. His baby daughter could not digest her food. The doctors frowned and confessed their perplexity to Alfred. 'Then she must have food that has already been digested for her', he answered, 'Science must do what her stomach cannot do.' They had never thought of such a thing. Alfred

1893 found in the laboratory what he could not find in the consulting-room. His child was given pre-digested food and she grew into a stronger baby.

Ludwig Mond still wished to dominate Alfred. Marriage was no excuse to the patriarch for his son going away and having his own life. He hated the distance between 'The Poplars' and the house Alfred had taken in Lowndes Square. Alfred would work all day in his chambers upon patent law, on which he was writing a book. When the day was ended, instead of being able to return to his wife, there would be a summons from his father: some plan to be opened and examined, some figures to check, some improvement or notion upon which Ludwig wished his son's opinion. Alfred's knowledge was stored in a form which Ludwig understood.

Alfred was torn between three lives: his work as a barrister, his life as a husband, and his duty to his father. One of them was obliged to suffer. The conflict gave Alfred's wife her first opportunity of showing her courage, her foresight and her common sense. Also, it was the first time that Alfred had found anybody to interpret him to his father. Mrs Mond went to her father-in-law at 'The Poplars' and pointed out to him that Alfred was destroying his abilities by dividing them. She showed Ludwig that a young man could not spend his days serving the law and his nights sitting up until it was late, talking upon his father's scientific and commercial problems.

The truth was that Ludwig was coming to need Alfred at last, but he stubbornly refused to admit it. It was not until 1902 that he swept away this barrier

between them. He wrote then, 'I must say frankly that I am afraid of facing all the work and troubles before me...without having you at my side'. Again and again he wrote, as if in contrition for his early misjudgment. 'Tell Alfred I am very pleased he is able and strong.... I am getting anxious that the excessive amount of work he has to attend to...may tell upon him....Pray write to me *truly* how Alfred stands the strain....' 1893

II

When Mond and Brunner made their journey from Widnes to Winnington in 1873, the difference in their talents made them essential to each other. Ludwig was born to dream and work beside his bench. Experiment was his passion. His letters show that the success of his inventions barely touched him. Honours were poured upon him, for his fame as a scientist spread across Europe. The stockbroker, the banker and the merchant knew of him as a successful man, rich and powerful. But this was as nothing to the less spectacular and rare reputation which he achieved in science. He went back to Heidelberg, and the professor who had risen in Bunsen's shadow greeted him with excited pride. The University honoured him with a degree. Oxford and Manchester followed by making him Doctor of Literature and Doctor of Science respectively. He was President of the Society of Chemical Industry, which he helped to form, and a Fellow of the Royal Society. His achievement touched almost every corner of Europe. Padua made him a Doctor of Science, Rome elected him to the Reale Accademia dei Lincei. He was elected to the German Chemical Society, the Prussian *Retrospect*

Retrospect Academy of Science and the Royal Society of Naples. He was given the Grand Cordon of the Crown of Italy.

These honours meant little or nothing to him. He was perpetually disappointed with his own achievement. He was wedded to the mysteries of science, the eternal excitement of taking some half-known, raw thing from the earth and exposing its secret, and then harnessing that secret to the service of mankind. There was Ludwig's romance.

Brunner had served him well in the first adventure. But John Brunner's greatness lay in a different direction. He was a business man, interested in education and citizenship. All was for service to the State. That was *his* romance. It was therefore inevitable that Ludwig and his old friend should part, so far as Ludwig's new inventions were concerned.

Again and again, his mother held up the stocking with the hole in it: again and again Ludwig asked the question, 'What became of the wool that was worn away?' The scene was different, and the little boy was an older man. But the question was the same.

When he sought for somebody to take John Brunner's place in his new schemes, he found Alfred and Robert at his side.

CHAPTER XI

I

ALFRED MOND'S wife had sown the seed of 1897 the greatest change in his life. Through her intervention, Ludwig came to have more sympathy for his son and then more appreciation of his talents. When Alfred joined his father, he gave up his legal practice, also the book he was writing upon patent law. He had acquired thorough knowledge of several aspects of industry in his legal work, and, thus equipped, he took John Brunner's place as the interpreter of his father's inventions.

When his laboratory at 'The Poplars' was finished, Ludwig turned to his old wish to increase the production of ammonia from fuel. What he had done as a boy near Cologne, and then at Winnington, led to still further experiments, and these were carried into the arena of commerce in the form of the Power Gas Corporation. Patents and licences were sold, a Parliamentary Company was formed—the South Staffordshire Mond Gas Company,—which supplied gas to a multitude of foundries and furnaces in the Birmingham district.

When the Mond gas was established, Ludwig's interests were side-tracked for a moment. He wondered whether the gas which he had discovered, so rich in hydrogen, might be converted direct into electric power. He began with a cell described as early as 1839, by Lord Justice Grove, and worked with pure hydrogen. Although he did not get the results he wanted, he increased the knowledge on the problem of pure hydrogen

1897 and the behaviour of platinum. This led to his association with Sir William Ramsay and Dr John Shields and then to further work upon similar lines.

During this time, Ludwig also developed the discovery of a non-poisonous white lead paint. It was put on the market, but the prejudices of the established interests against scientific fact and change eventually obliged the company to go into liquidation.

In all these ventures, Alfred attended upon his father, gradually gathering the experience which served him so well in industry when he was an older man. By this time, Robert Mond had accumulated the knowledge and experience which allowed him to serve his father in a different way. While Alfred interpreted his father's inventions, Robert aided Ludwig in the laboratory. He was constituted differently from his brother; his were the delights of the chemist and the archaeologist.¹

II

Ludwig Mond had lived through two generations of dramatic progress in speed, locomotion and machines. To compete with the strain put upon them, machines had to be made bigger and stronger. Steel was slowly becoming less and less adequate for meeting the new

¹ When Ludwig Mond completed his work upon the nickel process, Robert Mond continued his father's experiments and identified the carbonyls of a big series of other metals. He studied their propensities and published many vital and valuable papers upon them. As the result of the experiments in the laboratory at 'The Poplars', forty-one separate patents were taken out in Ludwig Mond's name. Dr Robert Mond's contribution to science and public life was honoured in 1932, when a knighthood was conferred upon him.

demands. There was need for a tougher metal which 1897 would stand the strain put upon it by the imagination and ideas of the inventors. Nickel was the best metal to add to steel to give it these qualities. But the nickel available in the world was so scarce that steel-makers never thought of using it on a big scale.

Guns had become more terrible and shells were more destructive, so the navy demanded stronger armour plates. Very soon, motor-cars were to add their terrors and delights to civilisation. Machines had to be strengthened to withstand the new passion for speed. Less than a hundred years before, Creevey had gasped because his train went at fifteen miles an hour. Now was coming the new age, with machines so vast and terrible that man was obliged to find some new metal, some new alloy strong enough to support the strain of his own invention.

It happened that while this new age was dawning, Ludwig Mond was working upon a process for obtaining the chlorine of ammonium chloride, by passing the vapour of ammonium chloride over nickel oxide.¹ Unwittingly he came upon the exciting and entirely fresh fact that a metal could exist in the form of gas. Bent over his bench, excited as he used to be with his boyhood experiments, he pursued the new theme. At one point in the experiment, it was necessary to use carbon monoxide to sweep the ammonia away from the apparatus before moving on to the next stage of the experiment.

¹ The chlorine contents of ammonium chloride was a by-product lost in the ammonia soda process, and Ludwig Mond was engaged upon an experiment for its recovery, one of the many experiments with which he continued to improve the great plant at Winnington.

1897 When introducing this gas into the vessel, Ludwig noticed its effect upon the nickel. They combined to form a gas, and Dr Mond was faced with a phenomenon which all the accumulation of scientific knowledge could not explain to him.

The story of this discovery and what it led to is exciting even to the layman. It is best told in the words of Alfred Mond, who was his father's companion during the experiments.¹

My father and Dr Langer² were working together upon another problem and in order to purify the gas they wanted for their purpose, they passed carbon monoxide over reduced nickel. They were burning it at the end of a glass pipe in order to prevent it from escaping into the room.

One day, much to their astonishment, they found this flame was burning an extraordinary green colour. Nobody could make out what it was, and when they held up the porcelain dish to cool it down they got a nickel mirror. Nobody had ever heard of a gas and metal forming a gaseous compound. Some might have dismissed it as a scientific curiosity, but they, scientific men, immediately saw there was a new phenomenon, investigated and found it was nickel carbonyl...a combination of gas and metal previously never heard of in science. That seemed to be an interesting scientific discovery, but of no particular industrial or commercial value. The gas was difficult to obtain, it was poisonous and it had many disadvantages, including danger to operatives if it escaped; but my father's technological mind was not satisfied until he had developed from that new fact the best and cheapest way of refining nickel from complex ores....

¹ In an address to the University of Swansea.

² Dr Langer, who was Ludwig Mond's collaborator and friend in many experiments, worked with Mond for more than ten years before this process was established in the great form of the Mond Nickel Company, now the International Nickel Company of Canada.

There was a great hiatus between the discovery of 1897
volatile heavy metal carbonyls and the final nickel
steel plate of a battleship. Ludwig Mond set about
making this great journey through the labyrinth of
commercial organisation, but his first efforts were
made unwillingly. He was an older man and he was
tired. This new secret had been thrust upon him late in
life, when the first fine energy which made him struggle
to make Winnington had faded a little. He asked John
Brunner to join him, as he had joined him in making
Winnington. But Brunner was a great citizen now,
with many occupations, much power and authority. He
was too busy to turn back to the hazards and drudgery
of pioneer work again.

Then Ludwig took his discovery into the City. He
showed the financiers and business men that his nickel
was ninety-nine point nine per cent. pure, a standard
which had never been achieved in making nickel for
industrial uses. But none of the men with money had
technical advisers who could show them the advantages
of Ludwig Mond's patent.

In addition to the purity of the nickel produced by
Ludwig Mond's method, there were other advantages
over all other patents. The great deposits of nickel ore
were in Ontario. The ore contained also copper and a
proportion of precious metals. These were lost in other
methods of recovery. Ludwig's process separated the
nickel of ninety-nine point nine per cent. purity, it
isolated the copper in the form of copper sulphate, and
it isolated the precious metals in such a form that they
could be recovered and refined.

Alfred Mond was with his father from the beginning

1897 of the new industrial achievement, and he was made a director of the company. There was one sinister fault in the process. The nickel carbonyl was a deadly poison and the process could be dangerous under any but skilled management and workmen. Not anticipating this danger, Ludwig and his sons set about putting the Mond nickel process on the market. Ludwig's assistant on the scientific side was Dr Langer. Together, they erected a small, discontinuous plant in a wooden shed at Smethwick, near Birmingham, in the metal works of Messrs Henry Wiggin and Company.

Ludwig lived through the excitement of the first years of Winnington again. Day and night, Mond and Langer watched the development of their schemes. The little green flame which had burned unexpectedly at the end of the glass pipe was but the nucleus of the discovery. Dr Mohr joined them and all three men worked and ate and sometimes slept in the laboratory outside, afraid to leave their secret unattended, anxious lest there should be some slip or accident if it were neglected.

Ludwig was older now. Yet he rose to the new test put upon his energies and, with the long months of anxiety passed, the process was perfected and he held success in his hands. But they were hands weakened and tired from the strain he had put upon them. Mond suddenly became an old man. Still the commercial men would not buy his patent and even Wiggin, in whose shadow he had worked, did not buy the patent when Ludwig offered it to him.¹ He was tired and he longed for the palazzo in Rome.

¹ The tables of fortune were turned in 1920, when the Mond

Ludwig and Robert Mond returned to London. They 1897 spread maps and papers upon the table and, joined by Alfred, they decided that they would force the patent through to success themselves. The deposits of nickel ore were in Canada. The ore contained only three or four per cent. of nickel and it was necessary to smelt these weak ores and produce a regulus containing thirty to forty per cent. of nickel. This could be shipped to England and treated by Mond's new process. Therefore the works should be on a part of the coast accessible to Canadian shipping and where the labour was skilled in metal work. They chose Clydach, near Swansea, which was set upon a canal and near to the railway.

The process perfected at Birmingham had not been continuous. Dr Langer was charged with the last development of the scheme, spread over many months. The plans were so complicated that Langer took them away to a lonely place in the Tyrol. There he wrestled with the endless technicalities, reducing the inspiration to plans which he drew with his own hand. After an anxious time, the great works were complete. The raw material was barely touched by hand. It went into the labyrinthine plant, a complex metallic substance containing nickel, copper, and precious metals. It emerged in its final forms, as nickel, in perfectly round and polished shot, as copper sulphate, in crystals, of vivid blue, and as the lesser compound of precious metals, to be taken to the refinery.

Dr Mond left England for the Riviera and for his well-earned rest. Hardly had he arrived in the South of Nickel Company acquired Messrs Henry Wiggin and Company and absorbed their activities into the company.

1897 France when deadly news was telegraphed to him. Three men had been poisoned by the nickel carbonyl and they were dead.¹ Ludwig instantly swept every personal consideration aside. He ordered the closing of the works and said he would return the share-holders' money from his own fortune. His friends who saw him at this time said that Ludwig Mond suddenly became an old man.

Alfred Mond was in London. He was younger and not so easily dismayed. Here was the conflict between age and vigorous youth, and Alfred won. As if his father's old cloak from Winnington was sitting upon his own shoulders, Alfred went to Clydach, accepted the personal responsibility of continuing the work and, persisting night and day, working so near to the danger that he himself had to watch anxiously for signs of the deadly poison, he forced the way to success. Alfred's dogged energy and stubborn refusal to accept failure as complacently as his father was prone to do, had saved the scheme from a miserable end.

III

The technical hardships were not all. The great nickel works began their history with a miserable year. Manufacturers and engineers accepted the new idea but slowly, and when the first year was ended, Alfred Mond, who had taken over the main burden of management from his father, found that there was not enough money in the bank to pay the preference dividend. His father

¹ Seventeen years passed before another man was poisoned in the works. Since then, there has been no instance of poisoning at all.

was ill and he dared not worry him with a second threat 1897
of disaster. Alfred was faced with the thought, horrible to him, that a Mond concern was to fail in keeping its word to its shareholders. He knew nobody whose advice he could seek. He acted in a way which was characteristic of him; characteristic of the courage and ruthless disregard for precedent which increased when he was older. He signed a cheque upon his father's own private banking account to carry the company around its rough corner and to fulfil his own notion of an inventor's promise to his financial supporters. Nor did his surprising act bring any credit to the Mond name, for he paid the share money out upon the company cheques, and his noble and expensive rashness remained a comparative secret.

The happiest picture of Alfred Mond at this time has been written in a note by a member of his secretariat:¹

'I first met Alfred Mond in 1901', he writes. 'I was a young man of twenty and he was thirty-three. I had been interviewed by the Office Manager and was awaiting the final verdict. Alfred Mond walked into the room, looked at me, said "You'll do" and walked out again.

'His movements in those days were quick and eager and his features had not the firmness of later years. He already wore the heavy black moustache which became so famous in caricatures of him during the time of the Free Trade Controversy and when he was in office. My first impressions were that he was a stern, unbending man, essentially just, but restrained as to human emotions. During the first year of my service, his hours at the office were from eight to nine a day, and in addition, he had a conference with his father at "The Poplars", almost

¹ Mr P. W. Cushion, who was an intimate member of Lord Melchett's secretariat for thirty years.

Alfred Mond

1897 every evening. He had great responsibilities upon his shoulders then, for he had several companies to manage and his father was too ill to take his old place in management and advice.

‘Alfred Mond was very human. He was serious and determined whilst discussing or considering a business proposition. But when the business was finished, he became a man of infinite charm, courtesy and geniality. He was always ready to listen to intelligent criticism, even if against what he had said. But he did not suffer fools gladly.

‘After the first year or two, business began to improve. The Mond Nickel Company was in production, the two gas companies were functioning and the load upon Alfred Mond’s shoulders was lighter. With this lightening of his troubles, or perhaps because I came to know him better, he seemed to change. His sternness of manner was lessened and he began to talk on various aspects of business and upon world conditions. I was struck by the great financial ability he showed and also by the knowledge which his legal training had given him. However complicated a proposition, he would seize upon the essentials in a very short time and during the many negotiations we had with foreign companies in those days, it was usually Alfred Mond’s proposal which formed the basis of the settlement. It was extraordinary to see a foreign business man who had come to pit his wits against Mond’s in making an agreement. The sense of trust which he gave them immediately dispelled all shrewdness. His sense of fairness was always to the fore. He believed that no agreement was likely to be of permanent benefit unless it gave a fair deal to all parties. Apropos of some negotiations we had about that time, he once said to me, “It is all very well having hold of the big end of the stick, but you won’t reap much benefit from it unless the man at the small end works in time with you”.

‘He had a real genius for business, and I have often thought that when he left business for politics, he was depriving his country of more than he was giving it. The great charm of Lord Melchett was his humanity. Although one of the busiest

men in the country and always immersed in affairs, yet he was 1897
always prepared to listen to any criticisms or suggestions anyone
had to make. He was approachable by any member of his staff,
and ready to give credit for good intentions. He recognised
that second class brains, or even third class, might have some
viewpoint which could be useful. He was, however, so quick
that he could very often see another point of view almost before
it was expressed, and allowed no time to be wasted.

‘He was always interested in world affairs, and would talk
for hours on world politics, art and music. He had tremendous
enthusiasm for the many businesses in which he was interested,
and although not interested in detail, had a real *knowledge* of
them. His point of view, expressed on many occasions, was that
he employed men of intellect and intelligence to govern his
companies. If they were capable of holding the positions in
which they were placed, they should be able to carry on once
he had outlined the policy without having to refer to him for
every decision. If they were not capable, they must be dis-
placed.

‘With regard to the policy of the Companies with which he
was concerned, however, this he held was a matter which could
only be dealt with by those responsible to the shareholders.
When it is a question of the policy to be followed in certain
events, or when it is a matter which concerns any definite line
of action, it is useless to send an under-manager to negotiate
with a Director.

‘In any business involving policy, only principals should
meet principals. Once the main lines are laid down, however,
then the conclusion can be left to others. He had a great belief
in personal contacts: more could be done in half an hour’s talk
than in reams of correspondence.

‘He had an almost uncanny judgment of a man, often after
only a very short conversation; in talking about the business,
I have been amazed at times at the soundness of the judgment
he had formed of the officials of the Company. In some cases,
when I was under the impression he had hardly met the man,

Alfred Mond

1897 he has surprised me with his knowledge, not only of his job, but of the character and mentality of the man. This facility was of tremendous use to him in his life, and rendered the difficult tasks he had to do much more easy.

‘He had, also, a great facility for turning from one subject to another: he could be immersed in the consideration of one aspect of his business for an hour or more, and having completed that, could immediately proceed to the consideration of another branch, totally dissimilar.

‘It always seemed to me that he had his brain so regimented that he could switch a subject off until it was wanted again and deal with something else....’

CHAPTER XII

I

FROM the beginning, Alfred Mond saw the 1893-1905 development and exploitation of his father's inventions in dimensions entirely different from those of Ludwig Mond himself. The first evidence of this difference came when he asked that an office should be opened to represent Winnington in London. Dr Mond had been satisfied with an office in one room at 'The Poplars'. His son saw chemical industry through the eyes of a rationalist. From the beginning, he ran his business along the rational lines which led to the creation of the Imperial Chemical Industries in 1926.

Mond's legal training had aided the discipline of his mind: the marshalling of his intellectual forces. He no longer seemed to suffer from mental confusions. He could look upon problems as individual and separate; as cases, each to be settled upon its own merits. The study of law had taught him to concentrate upon an individual issue. The practice of law had given him the power to pierce the confusions about a problem and find the inner truth.

Lady Erleigh¹ tells a story of a later day when she induced him to go to one of her charity meetings. He came after a long day of work, and she watched him, his head bowed as if he were asleep. Half ashamed for having brought him, she listened to the arguments going on among the members of the committee. When they had been discussing their object for half an hour,

¹ Viscountess Erleigh, the late Lord Melchett's eldest daughter.

1893-1905 with little progress to their credit, her father raised his head. Then he stood up, and in four or five sentences he showed them the point towards which they had been struggling blindly. His decision was abrupt and final. 'This is what you should do', he said. Then he went out of the room. He had the royal gift of being able to throw himself into the concern of the moment as if all the affairs of the rest of the world were forgotten in favour of the one interest. This talent made it possible for him to divide his interests and serve each of them well.

II

1898 About this time, Dr Ludwig Mond purchased Lord Albemarle's town house and, in the name of the Davy Faraday Laboratory, he presented it to the Royal Institution, which was next door. In this generous work he was aided by his son Robert. The laboratory was equipped and endowed, and Ludwig's friend, Sir James Dewar, was the first scientist to occupy the flat in the upper storey. Ludwig had provided this accommodation, in addition to the laboratory, to induce distinguished scientists into the work of the Institution. Dr Mond gave one hundred thousand pounds for this work, so that money need not be an anxiety to scientists who wished to study there. Mond's endowments encouraged study all over Europe. Seldom had a fortune been poured back upon good objects so freely. Ludwig Mond's money interested him only in so far as it gave him new opportunities for being generous. Even his precious collection of pictures, increased and enriched every year, was for the nation. And his be-

loved Palazzo in Rome was destined to be a library and 1898
hostel for students. There is a brave and grand quality
about the figure of the older Ludwig Mond, still loving
his laboratory, leaving it reluctantly to wrestle with his
son over some intricacy of the business of his companies,
impatient of the tangle of affairs, but delighted when he
found that Winnington was making him so rich that he
was able to increase his endowments. Now he could
pay an orchestra to play half-forgotten Bach music, in
the special hall he had built in the garden of his house
in Rome. He had the money needed to encourage a
struggling painter or to send a promising scholar to
Italy or to Athens; money to buy a precious old master at
Christies or to purchase the glorious Filippo Lippi which
is now in the Palazzo Venezia¹, though the law of Italy
prevented him from ever bringing it out of the country.
It was always waiting for him during his brief months
in Rome, to refresh him with its beautiful colour and
its peaceful composition. He had also bought Combe
Bank, a country house, near Sevenoaks. Here he en-
tertained his friends, but here, too, he made another
laboratory. He desired no rest from his experiments.

Somebody has said to the biographer: 'I never
thought of money in connection with Ludwig Mond,
and yet I knew him for many years. It was always
evident that he was a man of taste and knowledge, but
it was never in any way apparent that he was a rich man.
Precious things gathered about him because they be-

¹ The Palazzo Venezia is the office of Signor Mussolini in Rome. A number of pictures from the Ludwig Mond Collection hang there. Signor Mussolini relaxed the law when the Filippo Lippi was brought to England for the Italian Exhibition in 1930.

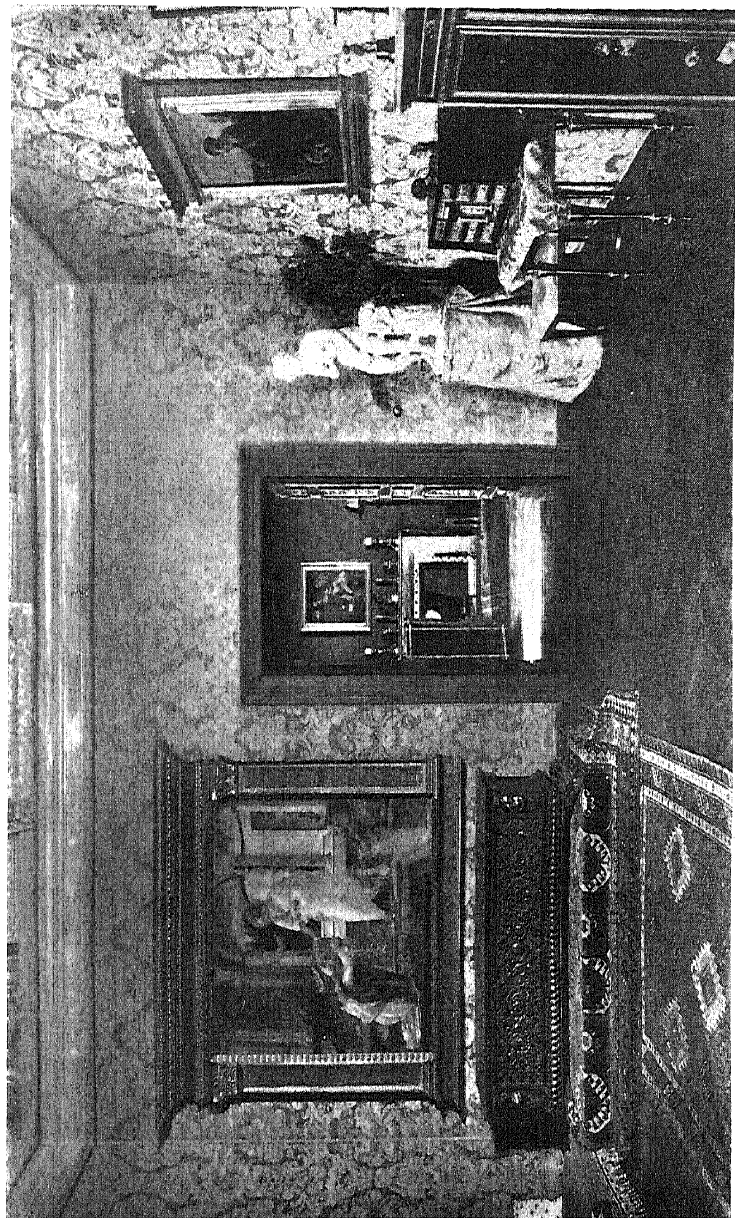
1898 longed to him; not because the accident of fortune made it possible for him to buy them'.

Ludwig Mond showered his riches upon his family in Germany, but there was one man who would not be converted to any increase of luxury. He was Ludwig's father. He was now very old, and the doctor in Cassel had recommended that he should be given good wine. But he still insisted upon buying cheap wine. Ludwig had to send an agent to Cassel to arrange with the merchant to send the best wine to his father at the lowest price. His father wrote to him when the next supply came: 'You are great fools to spend money—I have found a wine which is the best in Germany, at the price I paid for the old one'.

Nor would he buy new clothes. When Ludwig went to see him, just before he died, he found his father wrapped in an old dressing-gown. Ludwig bought a new gown and told the housekeeper to destroy the old one. When his father asked for his dressing-gown in the morning and was given the new one, he said, 'Where is my old one?' The housekeeper admitted that she had burned it. He was so angry that he said, 'Well, I shall not wear it', and he stayed in bed for a week as a protest against his son's extravagance.

III

During one of Ludwig Mond's holidays in Rome, there was an irrelevant interlude which has always been remembered with pleasure by his family. In the first days of the Mond Nickel Company, Dr Mond and Robert were obliged to go to Canada to choose a site for the ore smelter. With characteristic thoroughness, Dr



A ROOM IN THE PALAZZO ZUCCARI, ROME
showing the Filippo Lippi.

Mond penetrated to the wildest limits of the back blocks 1898
before he made his decision. One of his journeys took him to the hut of a man whose only companions were two tame bears. Suspicious, stubborn and wild, the man showed them his shack, but he sat on his land and refused to sign anything. So Dr Mond and Robert returned to civilisation and then to Europe.

Slowly, the wild man of the back blocks realised that there might be a glimmer of good in the suggestion of these two wily business men who wanted his name upon a piece of paper. So he stirred from his lethargy. He packed a carpet bag, left his bears in the care of a neighbour and set out for England. He found his way to 'The Poplars'. An astonished servant told him that Dr Mond had gone to Rome. The wild man crossed the Channel, and one day, when the Mond family was gathered together in the Palazzo, the strange figure appeared, bearded and unkempt. Ludwig Mond showed him the Palazzo; he showed him his pictures and the view of St Peter's from the roof. The wild man signed an agreement. Then he went back to his bears and to his loneliness.

IV

When Alfred Mond had reduced the involved business 1900
of his father's companies into a routine, he was able to return to his old love, the Liberal cause. The oratory of the Liberal Club at Winnington was reawakened. He spoke at meetings, he prepared pamphlets and posters and he arranged campaigns. He was elected treasurer of the Free Trade Union and thus came into touch with new causes and the young men who served them.

1900 Encouraged by their zeal, he stood for the Salford seat in 1900.

This first attempt was enfeebled by ill-health. The strain of speaking in public was so terrible for him that he would lie upon the sofa in the hotel, physically sick with anxiety. He did not know how to conserve his nervous strength, and his wife, who was with him, was obliged to assume most of the burden of organisation. Mond further prejudiced his chances of election by flying the Temperance flag, in a constituency in which the drink trade was fat and rich. He broke still another lance by declaring himself opposed to the South African War, which was the terror and excitement of the day. He resented the selfishness of the South African mine-owners: he wished to see the war carried on to victory, but the undercurrents of their avarice and anger shocked him. So he stood up as a candidate in a losing game when he asked Salford for its support. But his speeches, which one finds reported at length in *The Manchester Guardian*, show that his talents were already alive and convincing. His attacks on Lord Salisbury were substantiated by a deluge of convincing facts. He welded contemporary evidence, history and scholarship into a brilliant speech, talking of the Armenian atrocities and of trade interests in China with the rich phrases and quietly marshalled evidence of an essayist. He recalled the principles of Cobden and Bright, 'Peace, retrenchment and reform', and asked Salford to enlarge its Liberalism—to change the principles to peace with *dignity*, retrenchment with *efficiency* and reform with *thoroughness*. But his enlightened Liberalism was still too much of a novelty for the

The birth of a son

electors of Salford. They clung to their Tory safety and 1900
Alfred Mond had to wait a few more years before
Liberalism caught the affection of the country: before
his own powers were developed so that he was able to
win Chester from the Tories in 1906.

In 1898, Alfred Mond's son¹ was born. There was one 1898
amusing interlude during this serious time. Dr Mond
was to leave for his usual holiday in Rome about the
date when his grandchild was expected. He upset all his
plans and remained in England. But the baby did not
arrive as early as was anticipated, and Ludwig, rising to
the old and noble form of his earlier days, was discovered
tramping up and down the office, mumbling, 'In all
their lives, women have only one calculation to make
and they always get it wrong'.

¹ The present Lord Melchett.

CHAPTER XIII

I

1905-1906 **I**N the first years of the new century, British industry was rich and the artisans and workmen were prosperous under the wings of the great industrialists. Yet the Government had remained strangely still, lagging behind the economic and social achievements of the country. Except for the years from 1892 to 1895, Britain had been safe in the hands of the Tory Government for twenty years; so safe, indeed, that it had come to languish in a tangle of cobwebs and antiquity. For these twenty years, the country had been ruled by gentlemen who played at politics. They had followed an age of great men, but they had followed with little more than dull efficiency. One realises the anaemic quality of their rule when one tries to think of any outstanding personality in the Government of the day. Excepting Lord Salisbury and Joseph Chamberlain, there was none.

Such a condition of political anaemia could not endure. At last, the Tories broke the patience of the complacent Englishman: he rose and swept them away in the elections of 1906, and the Liberals were enthroned at Westminster.

Alfred Mond had watched the maturing volcano with delight. His Liberalism was born of the simple object-lesson of Winnington. The Tory landlords had tried to forbid his father's chimney stacks and towers. It mattered little to these good, but short-sighted Englishmen that industry was lifting the standard of living of

all the villagers about them. There was something grand 1905-1906
about their stubbornness, but it was also tainted with
selfishness.

Defying their antagonism, Alfred Mond's father had built his works and with his inventions he had bestowed benefits upon the whole of England. It is romantic to consider what blessings cheap soda, cheap soap, cheaper glass and paper had brought into the homes of the poor. All these were made possible by Ludwig Mond's soda process and his other inventions.

From his childhood, Alfred had watched Industry struggling against the Tory regime. When still an undergraduate, he had worked out his own plans for Health Insurance, Unemployment Insurance, and increased franchise. The Popular budget and the Housing and Factory Acts were included in his schemes. Only the fresh young Liberals could foster such innovations. Undaunted by his failure at Salford, Alfred Mond gave his heart and his energies to the Liberal cause with increased passion.

All over England, charming, urbane landowners had represented their constituencies at Westminster for twenty years. Their tradition was magnificent. They were sons of an old and amazing line of fine English gentlemen. They hunted and they shot, they smiled indulgently on the fringe of their great and noble parks, they bestowed bounties upon the people; they opened their parks one day a week, so that the wide-eyed villagers might peep into paradise, a paradise of oaks and pools, miniature temples and herds of deer whose pedigree was as ancient and picturesque as their own.

Mond himself was thrilled when he contemplated

1905-1906 the stubbornness with which they clung to the past. But therein was the difference between them and his own, beloved, Liberal idea. The Tories shaded their old eyes and looked at yesterday. The Liberals turned and contemplated to-morrow. They saw the picture in true, if melodramatic colours. They admitted that it was sad to see great oaks fall prone upon English lawns. But it was more terrible if babies died in crowded slums, so that the oaks might live.

The cottages outside the great parks were bursting with children, and factory chimneys were rising so high and so menacingly near that the fresh young buds upon the oak trees in the parks were begrimed and stunted. The war against the old security came nearer and nearer. Thus the Liberals argued, with justice.

It seemed to the old Tories that when the great Queen died in Osborne, the last shred of beauty had died out of England's story. As her funeral cortège moved up Southampton Water, the Tory security came nearer and nearer to decay. Almost three hundred years before, Charles the First had been brought up the same Southampton Water as a prisoner, to die in the shivering dawn at Whitehall, so that Englishmen might be more free and more healthily vulgar. Now, in the nineteen hundreds, Englishmen demanded still another slice of freedom. They wanted to despoil the parks of England and build factories upon them. They wanted to fell the great oaks, to make rafters for their workshops. They wanted the great houses for schools in which their children might be taught something more than husbandry and the mild pursuits of peasants.

The demand was horrible, but it was inevitable.

II

No constituency was more secure in its ancient tradition than Chester. Here was the flowering of the English idea; a cathedral town, with old bells in its towers, old shadows in its cloisters: the shadows dear to every Englishman. Every man in Chester had been brought up to believe that nothing was good for him unless it had also been good for his grandfather. Innovation was an indecency not to be contemplated. Beyond Chester's boundaries there might be industrial areas, crying out for change; there might be new and vulgar towns, indulging in the gross idea of emancipation. But Chester lived, in the dimness of her past, aloof and secure from such changes. 1905-1906

Was not their member a country gentleman? A Yerburch, whose family story went back to the yellow records of the twelfth century? He had represented them for twenty years. He smiled at them from immaculate carriages, drawn by well-bred horses. His clothes recalled the great London house where he was gracious enough to receive them for a moment, if ever they came to London and wished for a ticket to sit through a debate in the House of Commons. True he was never in the House himself, to delight their eye. But he had a smile at election time which disarmed all criticism. He was one of the bones in the great spine of Conservative England. The backbone might be a very dull part of the body, but it was also very vital. They trusted him. The nauseating industrial revival which despoiled the country about Cheshire would not dare to besmirch Chester itself. The arrogance which

1905-1906 surrounded these grand Tories was almost beyond belief. Coningsby Disraeli used the Imperial Crown upon his New Year card, to delight his constituents. He said he had every right to do so, since his 'great ancestor' gave the Imperial Crown to the throne.¹

Spurred on by the grand notion of Coningsby Disraeli, Mr Yerburch printed the Royal Crown upon his election card. But there was sanity in high places. Lord Knollys reprimanded both of them and said that the King strongly deprecated such an action.²

It was into this stronghold that Alfred Mond intruded, with not one external condition in his favour, his voice still thick and harsh, to fight in the name of the new hopeful and enlightened England.

The Liberals had shining weapons with which to make their attack before the election. The Nonconformists had been offended by Balfour's Education Act, and they saw in the new party their own safety against further interference. Almost every chapel in the land was on the Liberal side. The Liberals were assured of the middle class vote. But a different bait was needed to attract the worker. He was not interested in the Church controversy, and he did not care very much about Free Trade. Tariffs were vague quantities to him. The sins which aroused him to passionate revolt against the Tories were the Taff Vale judgment and the introduction of Chinese labour into Africa.

Nowadays we are accustomed to the figure of the

¹ Letter from Lord Knollys to Mr A. E. Paterson, of Altrincham, from Buckingham Palace, January 10th, 1906.

² Letter from Lord Knollys to Mr (now Sir) Noel Curtis-Bennett, Alfred Mond's private secretary.



ELECTION DAY IN CHESTER.

loyal South African millionaire, bestowing schools and endowments upon the mother country, which, in turn, bestows baronetcies upon him. He can afford to possess a conscience now. But in the early days, when fortunes were still to be made, when the Rand was wild and full of hazards, he was a different fellow. He wore less conscience then. He imported Chinese labour into his mines, introducing a third, yellow race into the already frightening conflict between black and white. What did it matter if he stored up trouble for the future, so long as he could escape with his fortune? 1905-1906

The Rand owners had employed thirty thousand Chinese in preference to thirty thousand Englishmen, who might well have migrated to the Transvaal. Therein was the cause of the Liberal protest and the anger of the British workmen. The Tory contention was that the white man could not do the work: the Liberal answer was a complete denial.

Mond's fighting methods were simple and courageous. He began by drawing up a document which showed Chester that their old member had been absent from the House upon almost every occasion when an important issue came to the vote. Yerburch's list of 'Absents' was incriminating.

When the question of Chinese labour came into the Chester struggle, Yerburch repeated his Tory arguments obediently. 'No white man could do the work required of him in the mines.' Alfred Mond took upon his shoulders the whole challenge against the argument of his party. He chose five Chester workers, a railwayman, a boilermaker, a builder's labourer and two ordinary labourers, and sent them to Africa to work in

1905-1906 the mines. With no actual knowledge of conditions, he ran the risk of exposure of the Liberal cause for the sake of truth. The mine-owners were so afraid of the experiment that not one of the big men on the Rand would employ the men from Chester. They were obliged to go to a mine at Barberton.

The five Cheshire men worked in the mine for six months, in the same circumstances as the Chinese and the Kaffirs did, and returned to London with their story.

By this time, Alfred Mond had been elected member for Chester, so he presented the returned miners in the Lobby of the House. They talked to the newspaper reporters and they talked to the politicians. Their story was a complete denial of the Tory argument. They had not been ill for even one day; they worked with single hand drills and they drilled seventy-two inches to the thirty-six inches drilled by the Chinese and the Kaffirs, in the same time. Their only complaint was that beer was one shilling and sixpence a bottle. With typical English calm, one of the men told the reporter that 'them's the prices that put you on good terms with water'.

The originality behind Alfred Mond's scheme of sending them to Africa was typical of the methods with which he faced all his political problems.

III

1906 Six months were to pass between the time of the election campaign and the return of Alfred Mond's labourers from South Africa. He approached his electors with certain definite enthusiasms. Free Trade, housing and trade unions lent colour to his speeches. The Welshmen

in Chester looked upon his wish for Disestablishment 1906 with favour. He wanted the Navy and the Army to be strengthened; he wanted old age pensions and he was an ardent suffragist. Mrs Mond had formed a Women's Liberal Association, and for a month or two she became the will of the women of Chester. She was strong and she was charming and she recognised no barriers. Her first meeting with Yerburch gives the colour of the early fight. It was in the Grosvenor Hotel, where they were both staying. Yerburch, gracious and certain, said, 'I suppose you are going to canvass. Ah, I had to do that in the old days. Now I am going off for a game of golf'.

Something of firmness in Mrs Mond's eye distracted him from his game. He went to his committee rooms instead. He set agents to follow this indomitable woman from house to house, to frustrate her success. While Mrs Mond drew the homes into her net, Alfred Mond talked from the platforms. At first the suspicious Chester men held back. Who was this unknown Jew who sought to lead them? His thick speech increased their prejudice.

Among those who came to support Mond was the young Welshman, Mr Lloyd George, weaver of great phrases, poet, with the valleys and hills of Wales casting a spell over everything he said. He has given the author a picture of one of the meetings. 'Alfred Mond, yes, I spoke for him at Chester. They were afraid of him at first. But he stood up before them and the force of his silence was enough to keep them quiet. And then he spoke, with knowledge which was simple and in phrases which were expressive. His sincerity broke

1906 down their resentment. They listened to the message of Liberalism. When he was moved by his own thoughts, he was effective, so much so that you forgot his accent. There were no gestures. His hands were still at his sides. There was just the glow of Mond's intelligence—that was all! And yet it was not all! There was an intensity which carried the Chester men with him.'

The campaign survived a wet and miserable December and the election came in January. It was the rule then to extend elections in the different constituencies over many days. As the results came in to Chester from other battles, the first taint of pessimism touched Yerburgh's committee rooms. He was a poor speaker; he trumpeted the old and noble cause with grace but without power. But he had the church and the brewers behind him.

Alfred Mond's speeches opened up new vistas of thought for the people. He hurled the new ideas at them and the keenness of his will made them listen. Slowly they learned that there might be faults in the old regime. Perhaps, after all, their grandfathers had made sorry blunders. Mond's later meetings became exciting and they were watched anxiously by the Tory fathers. On the eve of the poll, when Mond stood up to speak, the great hall thundered with cheers. The booing died weakly. He had touched the imagination of the mass of the people; he had taught them the gigantic possibilities in the word *to-morrow*.

Alfred Mond met Yerburgh by chance on election morning. Yerburgh, immaculate, confident and charming, drove off in his dog-cart. Mond had no such setting. But he had given the people of Chester a new wonder,

and, aware of his success, his enthusiasm assumed a kind of arrogance. For the first time in his life he had had power over a mass of people. He thrived on the experience. He set out on election day, daring to hope for victory. 1906

There was one relief from the intensity of the scene. News came through that Balfour had fallen. The incessant cliché of Yerburch's speeches had been, 'I am a follower of Balfour'. Alfred Mond smiled and said he hoped that it would be true.

IV

Mond and Yerburch met again for the counting in the evening. The long trestle tables were covered with the voting papers, and slowly, in packets of fifty, they were clipped into coloured pegs, yellow for Mond and red, white and blue for Yerburch. Packets went this way and then that way. The yellows seemed to be growing and then the red, white and blues mounted suddenly and dangerously. Towards the end, the two tables were covered with the little packets, but so evenly that nobody could guess the result at a glance. The returning officer made the last count and turned to announce the result. Yerburch was in.

Then followed a scene which requires the theatre to produce it. The room became excited and noisy. Alfred Mond caught his breath and stood absolutely still. With cold reason, he made a calculation. He knew the number of his votes. When he spoke, his voice was quiet and yet so dominating that the room became silent. He said that there must have been a mistake in the counting. Mond stepped forward and searched among the

Alfred Mond

1906 voting papers, and at last he came upon a bundle on the Conservative table. The top paper in the peg was assuredly a Tory vote, but beneath it were fifty yellow votes for himself. The margin was so narrow that the little bundle made Alfred Mond member for Chester, the first member not to wave the Tory flag for twenty years.

A different Alfred Mond returned to London. He seemed to flourish and grow in an hour. His politics assumed shape and his thoughts found courage and form of expression. Success had loosened the purse strings of his talents.

CHAPTER XIV

I

ONE may turn to the story of Disraeli to find the 1906 parallel of Alfred Mond's first years in the House of Commons. He came back from Chester, tired but pleased, enlivened by a hundred ideas which he wished to elaborate in the House. After the Chester elections, his wife suggested to him that it would be well if he learned elocution, to remove the thickness from his speech. Day after day he walked up and down his study at Lowndes Square, struggling with his lesson like a schoolboy.

For three days after the opening of the new Parliament, Mond walked about the rooms of Westminster, listening to his elders, wavering between respect and contempt for them. The Commons were rich with new blood. Rufus Isaacs¹ was added to the company, a diamond, brilliant and hard, a suave lawyer, emerging from a boyhood of romance. F. E. Smith,² too, was to make his maiden speech, an erudite and polished essay, which had been trimmed and perfected throughout the campaign in his constituency. And there was J. E. B. Seely,³ bringing a sweet tang of adventure into the shadows of the House. There were others—a mixed bag of the clever, the wise and the good. Mond had come to pit his talents against some brilliant men.

¹ Now the Marquess of Reading.

² Afterwards Earl of Birkenhead.

³ Now Major-General The Rt. Hon. J. E. B. Seely, P.C., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

1906 Whatever grace or thought he had conjured up to help him in his maiden speech was forgotten when, on February the twenty-third, he stood up to denounce the Tories for their attitude towards the employment of Chinese in Africa. He had been in the House three days.

Mr Lloyd George has told the author that the Tories laughed at Alfred Mond when he began his speech. But the fire behind his thick voice compelled them to listen. The house was crowded and Lord Percy¹ had just sat down after admonishing the Liberals for the supposedly wicked means by which they won the election. He had talked of their election methods as having poisoned the wells of truth and he had tantalised Mond with his references to Chinese labour in Africa. Here was a matter upon which Mond could speak with authority. He trusted the success of his maiden speech to this spontaneous occasion, with no material but the few notes he had made during the speech before his own.

Even thus handicapped, he struck a note which indicated the later influence he achieved as a Parliamentarian. It was the business of the disgruntled mine-owners in Africa to make money, he said, but it was the business of the House to govern the Empire.

He tried to draw the attention of the House away from the bickering over election methods and mine-owners' agitation. He directed them to a broader issue—the far-spreading future of Africa. He lifted the discussion from a note of momentary temper to one of the

¹ Hansard, February 23rd, 1906, col. 650. Lord Percy was afterwards Duke of Northumberland, father of the present Duke.

future. There would come a time, he said, when the gold 1906
of the Transvaal would be exhausted: the excitements
of mining would pass and the country would retire into
the quiet pursuits of agriculture. The mine-owners
would return to English life and leave the country to
farmers. It might be the duty of the mine-owners to
make money for the moment. But it was the duty of
the Government to see that Africa was protected from
dangers in the far future: to see that, like California and
Australia, Africa should have an English population to
strengthen it and sustain it when the mining failed.
'A white population which would spread out from the
mines on to the land and enable us truly to hold the
Colony we had made such efforts to acquire.'¹

It was the Imperial aspect that had always appealed
to him most strongly, and he was prepared even to pay
subsidies in order to keep a white population in the
country.²

II

The cause of Free Trade brought forth a fuller measure 1907
of Mond's powers of argument and conviction.
The Tories howled when they heard the argument of
the Free Trader expressed with such power. To them,
Mond was another Hebrew who had amassed millions
through some cleverness vouchsafed to his race. They
said so, openly, when the texture of his speeches was
re-examined in the smoking-room or among themselves.
The Liberals were delighted to have their case pre-
sented, not only with force, but with freshness. 'He

¹ Hansard, February 23rd, 1906, col. 658.

² *Ibid.* col. 659.

1907 was always interesting, whatever he spoke about', Mr Lloyd George has said. The interest, the force, and the freshness came from Mond's store of knowledge and his zealous hunting in far places for information.

Mr Bridgeman¹ was the first butt of his attack on Protection. In May of 1907, Mond had centred a great deal of his anger upon the indefiniteness of the Protectionist argument. He recalled the conditions of the time in a later speech:

We can carry on business under a tariff. We can carry on business under Free Trade. But no human being can carry on business under an uncertainty. I know personally of a whole series of works that have not been started in this country since the tariff agitation began.

He dismissed Mr Bridgeman as being possibly an eminent statesman, but very poor as a potential business man. Then he took the cause of Protection from the nebulous world of theories and damned it with an attack of facts which still make the two or three pages of Hansard, in which they appear, seem like the final and awful proof that the Tories were talking nonsense. It is difficult to emerge from the pages of Hansard which record these Free Trade speeches of Mond's with any judgment of one's own.

Mond's objections were aimed at the theorists on both sides of the House. He wanted to consider the relative merits of Free Trade and Protection from the point of view of the workman and the shopkeeper. He pleaded on behalf of the merchants and the industrialists whom he represented. 'For goodness' sake leave us untouched', he said. As a man 'responsible to many

¹ Now the Viscount Bridgeman of Leigh.

thousands of shareholders, for many million pounds 1907
worth of capital and for the welfare of many thousands
of English workmen', he begged the Tories not to
shackle the hands and feet of industry by trying to
assist.

Then he directed their attention to America and its
experiments in Protection. America adopted a tariff to
pay for its war. Thus protected and unexpectedly
blessed, the American manufacturers had grown rich
and, when the war ended, they saw to it that they re-
tained their precious tariffs and grew still richer. The
virtues of pure revenue were drained out of their tariffs
and the evils of the protectionist spirit were introduced.
American tariffs had deteriorated into a see-saw state.
At one time, pig-iron was highly taxed and wool only
slightly taxed. In the next revision, wool would be
exalted to a big tax and pig-iron would be allowed to
fall. The American steel trust had drawn thirty million
pounds from the American people every year under this
pernicious system. Instead of enriching the country
with revenue, America's system of protection merely
enriched individuals.

On another occasion Mond said, 'America has a
tariff revision every five years. If trade is bad, they put
the tariff up. If at the end of five years trade is still bad,
they put the tariff down. And yet', he added, 'there is
a blind, foolish notion that their tariff makes their
trade'.¹

'We are pure in our politics in this country in a way
they are not pure in any other country in the world', he
said, and he added his warning that Protection would

¹ *Questions of To-day and To-morrow*, p. 33.

1907 bring to England the same jobbery which stained American commerce and government.

III

1908 Before he spoke again in the House, Alfred Mond gathered a store of new facts to refresh his arguments. He attacked the Tory desire for small duties on many imports, upon coldly economic grounds, 'as the most foolish, the most costly and the most futile expedient to which any Chancellor of the Exchequer could ever endeavour to resort'. To begin with, he wished to explode the Tory notion that taxes were paid by the articles themselves or by the foreigners who manufactured them. Taxes were paid by the people who bought them. A man like Bismarck might favour indirect taxation 'because nobody knew what he paid, and therefore nobody felt the tax'. Bismarck might add as a solace that with this principle, the mass of the people would be contented because they would not know what they paid. Mond denounced such cynicism as being irreconcilable with English ethics.

'Sound finance', he said, 'should mean that the taxpayer ought to know how much taxes he is paying, because it is only when he begins to feel the burden of taxation that he will begin to take an interest in the economy of administration; and until he takes an interest in the economy of administration, he is not really taking his due part in the government of the country.'

Again he turned to America to reveal the small benefit which would come from taxation of imported manufactured goods. America drew only twenty-eight per cent. of her revenue from this source; Germany less

than twenty per cent. By extending the field of taxation 1908 to include hundreds of small manufactured goods, these countries had been obliged to create intricate machinery, staffs of experts, collecting bases and policing systems which gobbled up such a big percentage of the revenue that, in many cases, the income did not defray the cost of collection. In Germany it had been found necessary to create a school for the training of Custom-house officials.

He chose compelling figures and he strengthened his argument. At that time, England spent a million pounds every year to gather in large duties on a small number of articles. By broadening the basis of taxation, the country would spend three million pounds in the machinery of customs collection and gather in five millions. Mond poured carefully gathered statistics upon the heads of the members to prove this. Then he pointed out the added penalty of building new bonded warehouses, of providing greater wharf space at the ports. Germany, with her few ports, could control the incoming ships with ease. England had almost two hundred ports on the Custom-house schedule, and the building and staffing of these would cost a tremendous amount of money.

Was it for this, he said, that the Tories would broaden the basis of taxation, upsetting the fiscal system of the country, cancelling all her commercial treaties and harassing and worrying every importer in the land.

He drew convincing pictures of the perplexed life of American business men, whose time was squandered by the delay of goods at ports, the arguments as to classification of the goods they imported, the difficulties they

1908 suffered in anticipating selling prices, because they were always at the mercy of the Customs officials when their goods arrived from abroad.

Two years later, Mond spoke again of the dangers of the Tory notion. He culled figures from Germany and showed that the taxes on bread had swelled the ranks of the Democratic party from hundreds to thousands, from thousands to millions, and that taxation had set the people to the extremity of rioting in the streets.

Occasionally, he revealed the far-reaching and original sources of his information. Before bombarding the Leader of the Opposition with fresh ammunition, in February of 1910, he armed himself with a convincing object-lesson with which to compare Britain's freedom with Germany's tariffs. It was, as usual, chosen from the state of the working man.

During the last election, I got, through the courtesy of a friend in Berlin, a complete outfit of the German workingman—his clothes, his boots, his shirt, and everything. He said that the clothes came to thirty-six shillings. I had them valued by a man of that line of business in my own constituency. I got the best advice I could get. The man did not know what the things cost in Germany. I merely showed him the goods and said, 'What would those things cost here?' He said, 'We do not have any things of such bad quality here'.

I said, 'What would similar better-class goods cost?' and he told me the same set of articles came in England to twenty-two shillings and sixpence. There is an example of how tariffs increase the cost of living.

When Alfred Mond again went to the electors for their support, after the rejection of Mr Lloyd George's Budget in 1910, he had earned the reputation of being perhaps the most convincing Free Trader who spoke

in the House. On this new occasion, he deserted 1908
Chester, which taxed his time so mercilessly, and stood
for Swansea.

Among those who came to support him again in his
successful candidature was Mr Lloyd George, who said:

Mr Mond is known to every member of the House of
Commons as one of its ablest members. There is no man in the
House who has delivered speeches on behalf of Free Trade
which have been more effective than those of Mr Mond. I have
heard Mr Mond almost fascinate and entrance the House of
Commons by his eloquent and effective presentation of the case
of Free Trade.

CHAPTER XV

1909 **L**UDWIG MOND lived long enough to see his son established and well known as a public man. Assured now of Alfred's powers, he lifted his old hands and passed the reins they had held so nobly on to his son. As Alfred grew in politics, so he also spread the field of his industrial interests. Sometimes in the evening he would leave the theories and high hopes of Westminster and dine with his father at Avenue Road. Ludwig Mond peered but dimly at the procession of figures bustling past him. Two new generations had grown up, and he sat as a patriarch in his chair at 'The Poplars'. The young approached him with fear and awe. He heard their laughter in the garden: he heard them arrive in their stinking motor-cars. His century was passed, he said.

The keen scientist had settled back comfortably into old age. He still went to Italy every winter, and gathered the people of Rome about him. He peered closer and closer at his pictures, for his eyes were dim. Then he would come to London, and when he arrived in his house, he would ask that the light should be turned on so that he could see his Titian—he had come to love it more than almost any picture in his collection.

Many of Ludwig's friends had died. The older workmen at Winnington, gnarled and tired, were dropping out one by one. Now and again he went to Winnington. It had grown beyond his dreams. He was a shade in this enormous place, which was being extended and



LUDWIG MOND, ALFRED MOND,
and the present LORD MELCHETT.

refreshed with new inventions. But his name was still 1909
exalted among his workers; even among the young
ones, who had never seen him stamping through the
works in his black coat and big hat. They treasured tales
of him; of his anger and his benevolence, his wrath and
his tenderness. When he came back and peered close
into their faces, searching here and there, with his dim
eyes, for the ones he remembered; when they heard his
deep voice whisper, 'I love to see old faces', their
tongues were dry in their throats. There was something
terrible about this mighty man, reduced to a huddled
figure in a bath chair. There were new directors and new
chemists with their new-fangled ideas. Still Ludwig's
name dominated Winnington. Even when he was
away, the memory of his power would excite their
imagination. The memory of his justice prevented them
from bickering, the consciousness that they were part
of his great creation spurred them on to work for
something more than their own material benefit. The
dignity of history had come to Winnington by this
time and there was an older, more feeble generation,
sitting in the inns or about the cottage fires, talking
of the old days.

When Ludwig came for the last time, he was feeble
and quiet. They wheeled his chair up the road by which
he had walked with John Brunner almost forty years
before. They led him into the forest of towers and over-
head railways, great arches of steel and a thousand
windows, catching the sunlight. He paused in front of
the Georgian house where he had lived. It seemed to
be so minute now, tucked in between the brick giants.
He still wore his big black hat and the long black coat

1909 which they had all known. In the afternoon, a thousand workmen gathered around him and he spoke to them. Indeed, he was a patriarch. There was the silence of deference, as they listened to him. He seemed to grow, bigger and stronger, as they watched him. 'I have been ill—But I am much better now. Very soon I shall be working with you again.'

One day, some months afterwards, Ludwig's grandson was called away from his class at school. He was sent to London because, they told him, his grandfather was very ill. The boy arrived at 'The Poplars' and he was taken to the dark room where Ludwig was resting, his tired eyes still shining above the long white beard which made him seem so old and remote. Outside the door were his relations. They might have been waiting for Rembrandt to paint them as the background of this portrait of an old and dying man. They were so still, so terrified in the knowledge that the great man of their family was dying. He had ruled them and he had showered money and kindness upon them. He had taken their name from its humble setting in Cassel and he had made it shine in exalted places.

Mrs Mond led her son to the old man. Ludwig turned his white head until he could see the boy standing near to him. Mrs Mond leaned over and said 'We all hope that Henry will carry on your tradition'. The old man answered 'We all hope that Henry will make himself necessary'.

His grandson was led out of the room and a few days afterwards Ludwig Mond died.

CHAPTER XVI

I

WHEN he had been a Member of Parliament for 1910 four years, Mond set down his views and ideals in a long memorandum which was never published. Its chief characteristics were impatience over the existing system and a prophecy of what was to happen in the political thought of the next twenty years.

This gift of prophecy is neither imagined nor exaggerated. When the author spoke to Signor Mussolini in Rome, in the spring of 1932, the Duce insisted upon this aspect of Mond's talents. 'Six years ago', said Signor Mussolini, 'Lord Melchett sat in this room and prophesied every political change which has come to England, right up to the present sweeping victory of the National Government.'

Alfred Mond's unpublished memorandum, written before the 1910 elections, speaks of his impatience with the British system, 'The habit of waiting until things happen...the complete neglect to endeavour to foresee possible difficulties...the most popular of British systems, known as *muddling through*'.

He smiled at the pretty notion in Europe that the English planned out their policy long in advance. 'Those behind the scenes', he wrote, 'know how accidental and spasmodic the real policy of this country has been.' Then he turned his forces against the political leaders 'of all parties'. 'Their lack of foresight and political acumen has to be made good by the loyalty of their followers and the fighting strength of the rank and

1910 file.' With such people as the British, he considered that a statesman of real power and ability could maintain himself at the head of affairs for generations. But he mourned that 'the end of next week' was about the longest period to which Ministers looked forward in their conduct of political affairs. He deplored that the Ministers generally ignored such a thing 'as a logical sequence of events'.

Mond's impatience was in no way the impatience of a Liberal kicking against party opposition. His impatience was directed against the entire system of government. Women's suffrage and Reform of the House of Lords were the first stones he wished to see in the path which was to lead away from antiquity and inertia.

He saw the Ministers as men 'converted by the force of circumstances, from being Directors of policy into being mere heads of Departments. Overwhelmed with cares of administration, they no longer had sufficient time to devote to the working out of an exposition of reasoned policy'. He wished for more Portfolios, and, anticipating the inspiration behind the five year plan and Fascism's attempts at logical governmental reform, Mond said that he believed that the solution of political anaemia was a reorganisation of the machinery of government, not merely upon the experience of the past, but so that it was equipped to deal with a mapped plan of campaign. He wished to appoint a goal some years ahead of contemporary troubles and concentrate all the thought and resources of the people upon achieving that goal.

Thus far back he anticipated the ideas which caused

such a man as Sir Oswald Mosley, the youngest member of the Socialist Cabinet, to resign from his first office; the ideas which the younger politicians advance so vigorously to-day. 1910

In a further note, Mond wrote:

The Government has much to learn concerning the psychology of the masses....It should be clear to them that words without action, threats without consequence are not likely to impress a virile nation. Audacity and courage attract as well as repel. They inspire respect and even fear in the hearts of opponents. Even bluff is not an instrument to be disregarded. But when that expedient is resorted to, it should be on the principle that the poker player who shows his hand to all his friends is not likely to prove very useful.

Mond wrote of the Ministers whose talents were exhausted in routine work, which left them no time to plan policies and future action. The papers beneath their noses prevented them from looking up and seeing any vision of what lay ahead of them.

In his memorandum Mond proposed a definite division of the work in the offices of the Government. An intelligence staff which could invent new machines of government, a general staff which could work those machines, and, for both, a mapped-out plan of campaign which would do away with the dilly dallying by the way.

II

The fresh young vigour which carried Mond into the House with the Liberals in 1906 had sustained many shocks in the actual experience of the Commons, and, as the natural reaction, his ideas enjoyed some

1910 changes. He had imagined that with the right men in the House, old tyrannies would die, and that Britain would prosper; that a sane democratic happiness would gild the condition of all classes. But the rejection of the Education Bill by the House of Lords had dispelled his attractive dream.

An idealist might struggle through an election so that he could carry his theories into the incubator of Westminster. He might use the essence of his being and the qualities of his brain in perfecting that theory; only to find, to continue the simple metaphor, that the egg which he tended in the incubator would be broken when it arrived in the House of Lords. He thought that the Liberals had sadly weakened since their election, and that they had missed a favourable opportunity for showing their teeth to the Second Chamber, when they rejected the Education Bill. He was distressed at the signs of Liberal decadence; the hiding of the teeth behind a complacent smile. He saw also, he said, that the poll had placed the Liberals 'in office but not in power' and that it was futile to make any effort, if the Lords were to act as a Tory censorship, tearing up Liberal Bills and lowering them into the waste-paper basket.

The Lords, he said, were a necessary obstacle in the path of over zealous reformers. But when the obstacle grew into the height and obstinacy of a brick wall, then its shape must be modified and its purposes reformed.¹

¹ The ideas in this chapter are taken from an unpublished memorandum of thirty-one pages, written about the time of the 1910 elections and now preserved among Lord Melchett's papers.

III

In the beginning, Mond's attack upon the House of Lords glowed with a reddish tint. Yet, in all his desire for the reform of the Second Chamber, he wished also that the country should be guarded against socialism. 'The people of this country...have not been accustomed, either in our times or in the past, to send many wild extremists to the House of Commons', he said.¹ He wrote at the time when franchise was limited to an average of ten thousand voters in each constituency. With his unbounded confidence in the calm sense of electors, he felt that the Second Chamber could be turned inside out, without weakening the barricade against the violent and the revolutionary.

Mond's dislike of the personnel of the Second Chamber was not because the members sat there with hereditary rights. His sympathy and concern for the great families of England was revealed in a speech which he made in October of 1909. He pointed out that death duties were assessed upon the basis of a normal span of life for each generation. If accidental misfortune robbed a family of two heirs within a short period, the estate was subject to two death duties. He urged the Chancellor of the Exchequer to remember the German idea, that no death duty should be paid by any particular estate within ten years of the last death. Mond thought that 'It would be more equitable to raise the scale of the Death Duties rather than to take it out of what you may call the accidental misfortune of certain persons'.

¹ Hansard, October 1st, 1909, col. 1591.

1907-1910 Mond's objection to the Peers was because of their Conservative prejudices—prejudices which established them as a permanent, High Tory committee which, as the Duke of Devonshire has said in the earlier days of the struggle, had never once extended its confidence to a Liberal Government. Mond's anger at the snail-like pace of the Lords was not that of a firebrand who wished to see all men equal. He simply wanted faster legislation, more in accord with social changes. 'Nobody,' he said in the House of Commons,¹ 'who has studied the changing social conditions, will deny that our legislation is nearly fifty years behind our social conditions to-day. No nation is more timid, more Conservative, more cautious in politics than the English nation....' He recalled Napoleon's conviction that 'The man who never made mistakes never made anything at all', and, hurling his impatience at the Tories, he tied the threads of his thought into one quiet opinion, an opinion which presaged his later faith in the value of conferences:

I do not look upon members of the other House as persons who are acting with a malevolent purpose or in a spirit of irresponsible opposition. I do not think anything is to be gained by going into the personal qualifications of the Peers, or holding them up to ridicule or insult. It merely degrades the whole debate. But the House of Lords knows that the will of this Chamber will ultimately prevail. Both parties will sit down in a business way, and settle the question in a business way, at one conference.

Just as in later years he tried to bring employer and worker together over the tables of the Melchett-Turner Conference, so, during the agitations against the Second

¹ June 26th, 1907.

Chamber, he hoped to settle the old differences with a 1907-1910
portion of sense.

Mond was awakened to new anger when the Lords rejected Mr Lloyd George's Budget in 1910. The arguments of this session have passed into limbo now: the fresh elections, the two dissolutions of Parliament, Asquith's maintained power, the renewed confidence of the people in the Liberal Government, and the final achievement of the Parliament Act, which provided that Budgets and all Money Bills should be passed in the Commons, and that all Bills passed three times in the Commons without amendment should be free of the Veto of the Lords.

The perspective vouchsafed to this generation shows the events leading up to the Parliament Act of 1910 as the thin end of a great wedge; perhaps the greatest which had been hammered into the rock of landed power since the Reform Bill. When the Parliament Act brought all power in relation to Money Bills into the Commons, it immediately cleared the Second House, so that only those peers who were genuinely concerned with their responsibilities bothered to sit through the long hours of debate. The others, who had a more bigoted and selfish view of their exalted position, stayed away. The Parliament Act denuded them of the power which had made it possible for them to veto their own taxation, when they felt the pinch of the screw too sharply.

Alfred Mond spoke many times during the debates which followed the rejection of the Budget. His contemporaries say that every time he spoke, he poured some fresh opinions upon the House. But the struggle

1907-1910 was still hard for him. Sometimes even Hansard complained that his voice was indistinct. He gave a lead to the general opinion when he said:

We have had control of finance in this House for three hundred years and we must continue to have it. If we are to be responsible for the expenditure, we must be responsible for the means of raising the money....In all those countries where they deal with finance, the same authority deals with estimates. We have to vote the money for the Army and the Navy and incur expenditure amounting to millions, and when we bring in our means for paying for that expenditure, another Chamber, with no voice in the expenditure, is to come and say, 'Oh! We will not allow you to raise money in this way'.

In March of 1910, Alfred Mond took his arguments from the Commons to the pages of *The English Review* and there he wrote:

In reality there is but one practical and rational solution of this problem in a democratic country, and that is the creation of an elective Second Chamber of the character of a Senate, whose members, by being made responsible to an electorate and subject to change, are bound to be influenced by the current of public opinion in a manner in which neither a hereditary nor a nominated chamber could ever be...it would be worse than foolish to go to the trouble of remodelling this part of our Constitution unless the change were sufficiently thorough to bring the new Second Chamber into harmony with modern ideas.

When the question of Lords reform came up again in 1922, Mond was Minister of Health. Perhaps time had softened his desire for reforms. At least it had extended his views of the functions of the Second Chamber: extended them, without changing their foundation. The notes from which he doubtless pre-

pared his arguments in the Cabinet tell us that he saw one great disadvantage in a purely elected Second Chamber. He drew the attention of the Cabinet to the fact that Viceroys, Governors-General or Ministers of the Crown, who were automatically raised to the peerage on retirement, so that they might still give their experience to the country, would be excluded from the Second Chamber. He indicated the loss this would be to the country and added that it was well to leave them this knowledge in a time when the inducements to such men were becoming less and less: that in retirement from appointments in India or the Dominions or from the Cabinet, they would still have in the Lords a field of influence for the knowledge and judgment which they possessed. He thought this would be an inducement to 'the best men in the country to continue to fill these positions'. He added, in his notes: 1907-1910

In fact, I am not sure that we ought not to go further and entitle members of the House of Commons who have been members for a considerable length of time, say twenty years, to have, if we wish, a right to a life seat in the Second Chamber, without necessarily conferring on them an hereditary peerage.

On a later page of his notes, he showed the one point upon which his views were changed by circumstances. In the days of his own anger against the Lords, he had reviled them for acting as a curb upon Liberal measures, and for being a permanent Tory committee, withholding its confidence from his Government. Twelve years afterwards, in a time of extended franchise, he wrote of the need for 'a really effective body capable of exercising a check on the extreme legis-

1907-1910 lation, if a future Labour Government is to come into existence'.

IV

(*Interlude*,
1928) Eighteen years after this time, Alfred Mond became a Peer and he joined the Second Chamber which he had attacked so vigorously in 1910. It is therefore appropriate at this juncture to record the changes in his attitude towards the Lords and also, what is even more important, the changes which came to the relative position of the Chamber in the political system. Mond joined a very different Second Chamber from that which engaged his antagonism in 1910. Franchise had been extended: where the average number of electors in a 1910 constituency had been ten thousand, now as many as sixty thousand people were able to vote at each poll. Then came female franchise. The whole foundation of elective government was changed, and it is reasonable and desirable to hope that Mond's views had developed with those changes. In 1910 the dangers from extremists had been small. In 1928 they were increased; the road to Westminster was no longer a straight and narrow path. Mond considered that the post-war people needed the curb of the Lords, in a way that the prosperous and peaceful pre-war generation had never done. After the Great War, there came a season in which the country needed calm censorship of its political fevers and extravagances.

There was another reason why Mond's attitude towards the Second Chamber was changed in later years. Its personnel was modified. In 1906, and after this, his Liberal friends had sought to change the Lords by a

The House of Lords

revolution against tradition. They had failed politically to do more than achieve the Parliament Act. What the politicians had sought to do with revolution had come slowly through evolution. It had always been the way with the British people. In 1847 and 1848, the changes that came to Germany and France with bloodshed and revolution were accepted by England without great public excitement. (Interlude, 1928)

While the Liberals had been kicking and clamouring to expel the hereditary Peers from the Second Chamber, the slow, calm changes of English life had put men like Lord Ashfield, the first Lord Barnby, Lord Inchcape, Lord Weir, Lord Colwyn, Lord Cunliffe, Lord Aberconway, Lord Crawford and Lord Leverhulme in the House of Peers.

In the early days of Mond's desire for change, the old landed class of Peers had entirely dominated the House. But England had changed from Agriculture to Industry and his old wish that the Lords should reflect the economic changes of the land had been realised. Great industrialists had refreshed the benches of the Second Chamber. The voice of the House of Lords became also the voice of industry and it seemed natural that Alfred Mond should join them. All the more so when we reflect that, in 1928, there were few industrialists left in the Commons. The responsible voice of industry was now removed from the First to the Second Chamber and there Mond said that he felt more at home.

1909 Like plays in the theatre, debates in the House of Commons seem to 'date' when you read them again, in the pages of Hansard. Speeches which shone against the background of contemporary politics seem to be dim when they are read in the light of subsequent history. Progress gives them a touch of antiquity which they did not possess when they were delivered. Because of this, it is neither interesting nor just to represent the achievement of a politician by extensive quotations from his speeches.

Perhaps the most exciting feature of Mond's speeches in the House was his ability to lift a debate from contemporary limitations. He would often widen the horizon of argument, with his prophetic instinct. One such occasion was in August of 1909, in a debate upon Aerial Navigation.¹ He said:

Take the Zeppelin dirigible. I do not think it is looked upon by the German military authorities at present as of very much use....The idea that there could easily be dropped from such machines explosive materials with any chance of hitting any particular object has been entirely disproved by all the experiments that have been made in that direction. No doubt an explosive dropped from an aerial machine would hit somewhere, but that would not be a very useful or a scientific method of bombardment....I think a dirigible would be more easily brought down by the use of some kind of shrapnel than that a dirigible would be at all likely to damage a warship....Anybody who has studied the problem will see that there is a limit to the use of the dirigible....What you have to study more is the aeroplane....

¹ Hansard, August 2nd, 1909, col. 1607.

VI

Mond could not give more than half of his time to politics. His father's companies had grown and extended their powers. Other soda manufactories had been affiliated with Winnington. Works at Middlewich, Port Clarence and Lostock were drawn into the net of Brunner, Mond and Co., and the output of soda was fourteen times what it was in the beginning of Ludwig Mond's prosperity. The firm had opened its own offices in India, China, Japan and South America. Mond nickel was well established and, through the Mond Carbonyl refining process at Clydach, the new metal was penetrating into all the markets and uses, opened up by development in machinery and speed. Every country in the world had come to rely upon nickel steel for the armour plating of its first-class ships of war. The Quebec and Manhattan Bridges were to be built with the aid of nickel steel; railway engineers were using nickel rails for sharp curves and were finding that they possessed four times the life of ordinary steel rails. Boiler tubes and artillery waggons, kitchen equipment, engine frames and axles were being made from the Mond metal.

Thus Alfred Mond's commercial interests extended, taxing his time and his inventive powers. More than fifty countries were using nickel for their coinage: almost every country except England, where the process was invented. In later years, armoured cars and tanks were to be manufactured from nickel steel and Mr Ford was to solve many of the problems of lightness and strength in cheap cars with its aid. The world was

1910 passing from the age of steel into the age of alloys and Alfred Mond had to face the possibilities of this change with as much foresight as he anticipated social and economic changes in the House of Commons. The dreams of his father's time were already models and plans upon his table. Armstrong's, Hadfield's and other manufacturers were changing the entire scope of the manufacture and composition of steel and, to keep pace with the new and startling advances, Mond was obliged to turn from his politics and business organisation to a third duty: the study of every development and possibility which concerned the raw materials produced at Winnington and Clydach.

VII

In addition to these interests, two elections were crowded into 1910, because of the complications which followed the rejection of Mr Lloyd George's Budget. Mond continued to represent Swansea, after a hard battle in which he was attacked so violently and melodramatically by Mr Ben Tillett that he threatened to put Mr Tillett in the stocks upon a charge of libel. Mr Tillett's kindly shrewdness was muddled in these younger days by a fervour which ran away with discretion. His charges might have wounded the reputation and the sensibilities of a less determined man than Alfred Mond. 'I have in my possession', said Mr Tillett, 'documentary proof of an attempt of the Liberal candidate to bribe me....The only reason this Mond is asked to represent you is because this Mond has plenty of money.' Friends came to warn Mond that Mr Tillett had threatened to throw him into the docks. Mr Tillett

accused Mond of methods which were 'sordid, wicked, calumnious and dirty'. It was no more than the vitriol which many a young politician has confused with his statesmanship. But the picture of Mr Tillett's younger anger is interesting because of his later esteem for Alfred Mond. The fever of the Swansea election passed, and in later years, when Mr Tillett had mellowed into a benign, socialist patriarch, he watched his old adversary at the Melchett-Turner Conference; he talked of his 'frank and energetic co-operation',¹ and of his 'Disinterested advice...as big as the man'.² In his *Memories and Recollections*, Mr Tillett wrote of Mond as a 'Seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams'.

The story of the election spleen need never have been told again if it were not for this later friendly reconciliation between Mr Tillett and Lord Melchett, a reconciliation which opened up the way to one of the most affectionate and interesting files of letters in all the Mond correspondence.

Winning the election was not all. Alfred Mond went back to Westminster to watch the rejugging of the portfolios. His services to the country had already been marked but they were of an order not likely to enchant his Prime Minister. Asquith served England because he believed in its great past. Alfred Mond served England because of its great future. The politics of Asquith were built upon English prejudice. The politics of Mond were built upon opinions. They were Liberals of entirely different moulds. Mond did not commend himself to Asquith's patronage, although

¹ Mr Ben Tillett, Notice of Motion, April 23rd, 1903.

² Mr Ben Tillett to Lord Melchett, April 12th, 1930.

1910 there was one occasion when one of his speeches moved the Prime Minister so deeply that he stopped Mond in the Lobby and put his hand upon his shoulder and congratulated him, with real feeling. In recounting the incident to his wife in a letter, Mond wrote, 'This is very much, coming from him'.

Purely academic, and British to the core, Asquith sat and viewed Mond critically, as the statesmen had viewed Disraeli and as the peers had viewed the Prince Consort. They were all foreigners, and Asquith's feeling for anybody from the other side of the Channel was tinged with patronage and pity.

Nor was Alfred Mond likely to serve Asquith without questioning his talents. He considered his leader as 'a man who had a fine brain which was incapable of presenting a problem to itself, whereas, if a problem was presented to it by somebody else, they got a good result'. But he trod warily in these high places of Liberalism.

Of Mrs Asquith he said that he thought her amusing: one of the brightest lights of Edwardian Society. But he added, as a tag to his thought, that some lights were better shaded. From the beginning he considered her 'apt to make mischief'.¹ Mrs Asquith was more spontaneous in appreciating Alfred Mond. She wrote of him as being 'so clever' and such a 'rare friend'. She was delighted because he liked her dress and she asked him to write her 'a long, private political letter' on what he really thought was the right thing to do over the Land scare.

Even the cause of Liberalism was not enough to

¹ Letter from Lord Melchett to Lady Melchett, undated.

Asquith and a Baronetcy

break down the natural barriers which lay between 1910 Mond and his leader. It was inevitable because of the difference in their natures that Asquith and Mond should never become friends.

In the reshuffling of offices in 1910, Asquith said to Mond, 'The Ministerial jobs have been promised and you are too big a man for an Under-secretaryship'. Asquith's colleagues still pressed him to honour Mond's talents in some way or other. So there was a further consideration of the position. In lieu of office, Asquith made Mond a Baronet, in July of 1910.

CHAPTER XVII

I

1910-1914

A NEW interest came into Sir Alfred Mond's life about this time, through his purchase of *The English Review*. A literary magazine might have been no more than a toy to a busy man who thought in millions. But Mond approached his first experiment as a magazine proprietor with almost childlike zeal. At that time, the *Review* was languishing and the liquidators had appeared in the office. Sir Alfred adopted the crippled child, and, with Mr Austin Harrison as editor, he restored it to health and prosperity.

Mond rose to the occasion valiantly. At that time, English magazines were intimidated by the old bogeys of respectability. Literature was dulled by the hand of Mrs Grundy. Here was a field for Mond's courage and taste—a review which might break new ground, encourage good writing and put Mrs Grundy across its knee and spank her thoroughly. Sir Alfred backed Austin Harrison in brave deeds. They began by publishing an article on Japanese morality, by Frank Harris. The result was so terrible that the *Review* was banned from the bookstalls. Mr Austin Harrison has told the story so well that any paraphrase would be an impertinence. He has written:

We were off the bookstalls—banned, in disgrace, and sales fell by the hundred. The question was, would Sir Alfred Mond hold on? He did gamely, and then four months after the boycott, a man strolled into the office, dripping wet (it was raining furiously at the time), unpacked a thick manuscript, told me no publisher would look at it, and walked out into the rain.

The man was John Masefield, and the poem was *The Everlasting Mercy*. I took it home and, after reading it, decided at once to publish. But in proof form it looked catastrophic—to the editor. I think it contained eighty repetitions of the word 'bloody', and ran to eighty pages of print. I sent it to three literary lights for consideration. One said it was 'bloody rot'. The second said I should be locked up if I printed it. The third said, 'It's splendid, but it will smash you'. That decided me. The poem appeared unedited in the following issue. Two days later the telephone began to ring continuously. Sir Alfred Mond 'phoned: 'You've done it, but it was worth doing', and then it got into the public houses, where the fight scene was read out aloud to admiring pugilists.

Probably no poem ever created such a stir since Byron's *Don Juan*. We printed edition after edition. A society lion-hunter asked me to dinner. A few weeks afterwards the trade placed us on the bookstalls again, from which date we never looked back.

Those eighty bloodies had saved the *Review*, which we then turned into a company and sold at a shilling. Masefield's three subsequent poems appeared in its pages, and each poem was an event. Our enemies were silenced. We became an institution. We struck out here and there, and I think I may claim that all the talent of that day appeared in the *Review*, in particular, D. H. Lawrence, the picaresque stories of R. B. Cunninghamham Graham, *Tono Bungay*, Norman Douglas, who for some years was sub-editor, Galsworthy, Frank Harris, W. H. Davies, and many, alas, who are now dead—poor Middleton, Flecker, Thomas, etc., etc.

We smashed not a few windows, and when the suffrage movement broke out we were among the first to espouse it. This endeared us to the women. We 'discovered' poets and writers—Tennyson Jesse, Tomlinson, Gilbert Frankau, Stacey Aumonier, etc., etc.; we were alive, adult and, I believe, of some real utility as a platform of new thought and yearnings at the close of the Victorian era, producing many fine stories, poems,

1910-1914 and articles which otherwise would not have found publication or public.

When the war came, Sir Alfred dropped out of his crusade, the *Review* passed into other hands and Mond's interests and anxieties were all drawn into the conflict. But when he turned his back upon the *Review*, he said good-bye to an adventure which had enriched English letters and pleased him greatly. He had sponsored one of the richest contributions any review had made to our literature, and the risks and tornadoes of publishing had given him a fresh excitement; an escape from the burden of business and politics.

During the years before the war, Mond was amassing experiences more diverse than almost any man of his day. The business responsibilities inherited from his father kept him near to financial affairs in almost every country. His agents in Germany, Japan, China and South America sent him letters which he gathered together in the manner of the Fugger family in the fifteenth century. The peculiar nature of the companies he directed made him awake to all scientific discovery, and his natural tastes added an aesthetic light to his material interests. Thus it might be said that he remained evenly balanced between the practical and the ideal, the past and the future. He was already invaluable in conference. He showed the qualities of thought, argument and decision which in later years made him the confidant of almost every politician who had an idea in his head. Lord Melchett's correspondence is a revelation, but unfortunately, a revelation which must be kept secret because so many of the men who sought his advice are still alive. His files contain letters from Prime Ministers,

cabinet ministers, young politicians, financiers, chemists, 1910-1914
poets, sculptors and actors who sought his advice. This aspect of his life was unknown outside his home. His own reticence and the natural shyness of all men to admit having sought advice kept the truth about the Mond oracle from being suspected. But it is true that even his political enemies sought his advice. Mr Lloyd George has said that Alfred Mond never expressed a view which was not wider than that of other men and that, with all his deep knowledge and wise and worldly judgment, he was endowed with kindness, in his nature and in his speech. Mr Lloyd George paid this tribute to Sir Alfred, long after their quarrel and long after they had separated, to sit on opposite sides of the House.

Lord Barnby has told the author of how Lord Melchett would sit at the table during a conference, and suddenly, from a long silence, make one statement which would bring law and order to the confusion of ideas and theories. Early in 1915, he walked on the terrace at Melchet and said 'the turning point in the war will come with the concentration on the Western Front and the Unity of Command'. This gift arose from his accumulation of knowledge, but also from the gift of prophecy, upon which one is tempted to be too insistent. Yet it has always been the privilege and blessing of the Jews.

Some people have said that this gift of prophecy was uncanny and that it was the mysterious power behind Alfred Mond's success. Others, seeking a more practical reason, say that his mind was trained so meticulously and so carefully, that he never raised his voice

1910-1914 until he was upon safe ground; until he was inviolably certain of the statement he was about to make. Those were the public opinions of his gift.

His own opinion was expressed once when he spoke to his daughter upon some plan in connection with Palestine. He had made suggestions which were not adopted by the Zionists, and everything tumbled into chaos as he had prophesied.

'How did you know, father?' she asked.

'I knew,' he answered, 'because experience has taught me the inevitable result in such circumstances. I use my accumulated experience as my book of reference; I pigeon-hole my experience so that I may refer to it, as a sovereign refers to his ministers...only with the added certainty that I will not be ill-advised.'

'History is the solution of every public problem in our lives to-day. Many people have known this fact. But they have used their history as an influence upon their actions. It should be used as a corrective of one's actions, a criticism of one's plans. It must be used only in relation to the future. Experience, which is *personal* history, elucidates *personal* problems in the same way as *natural* history elucidates *natural* problems. If men stored their experience in good order, they could be well guided in their actions.'

Once the word prophecy was suggested to him as an explanation of his success.

'The prophet is a man who knows his history', was his answer. 'History', he added, 'must be a mountain from which we survey the future. It must not be a sea of old usage and prejudice in which we allow ourselves to drown.'

CHAPTER XVIII

I

IN spite of the public opinion of Mond's talents, the true story of his life is not that of a man great in politics and industry. The full measure of his gifts was warped in both these fields. The more private letters among his papers show that the spirit within Mond was greater than his achievement. His whole life was a failure from the worldly point of view. Within the clever business man and the zealous politician, there dwelt the mystic, the scholar and the artist. If the statement arouses an exclamation of scorn among those who imagine that they knew him well, then the exclamation establishes their own limitations. 1910

It might be pleasant at this point in the story to move away from the theatre of Sir Alfred's life in business and in the House and discover him as a local politician, pursuing Disestablishment and Land Reform for his Welsh constituents, serving and enlightening his constituency. In 1910, the National Insurance Bill was dividing the affections of the Commons. Alfred Mond had made several speeches, drawing on his experience of Winnington and his studies of European working conditions, to impress the need for Health Insurance upon the House. He had scolded Mr Ramsay MacDonald for showing retrograde tendencies—'a more anti-Socialist speech I never heard', he said. 'I think it is a very good individualistic speech of the old school, and would have suited the time of the Reform Bill or the Poor Law of 1832.'

1910 Among the records of his apprenticeship to Liberalism, as a youth at Winnington, were plans for Health Insurance. It was an ideal which had grown out of his living shoulder to shoulder with his father's workmen. It was an idea which was already, like the eight-hour day, well established in his father's works. He was in the position of the chemist who has already made his experiment when he spoke in the House; he was not a theorist weaving a dream.

In October of 1911, Sir Alfred descended upon Swansea to tell the people exactly what the Health Insurance Bill would mean to them. He spoke to an enormous meeting in the Albert Hall and his speech, printed in a booklet, shows the care with which he sought to place the cause fairly before the electors, warning them of its limitations as well as explaining its benefits.

We do not want to spend millions in putting people in sanatoria when they have got consumption. What we want to do is to prevent people becoming ill, and the cheapest method is to stop people getting tuberculosis and going to sanatoria.

The principle may seem to be a little old-fashioned now; merely a cliché of common sense in government. But, at that time, the simple old saying about Prevention and Cure did not greatly influence public health.

It was still possible, as recently as 1914, for a Tory member, admittedly Sir Frederick Banbury, to pounce upon Sir Alfred with the following astonishing statement.

...I am not concerned very much with what occurs abroad. I am an Englishman, and, rightly or wrongly, I believe that England is the first country in the world, and I am quite content

to go upon the old lines my forefathers went on before. What 1910
was good enough for them is good enough for me.

Sir Alfred Mond's journeys to his constituency were but a small part of his interest in Swansea. His delight came at the end of a day, when the last eager citizen had left his little white house, set in a garden on the hill; when the last disgruntled Swansea men had been pacified and sent off with a notion to cogitate upon. Then Mond was alone.

'J. D. W.', one of his supporters and friends in Swansea, has written an entrancing picture of what would happen after such a day, when Mond would look out of the sitting-room and find that at last there was nobody waiting to see him. He would go to the telephone and, writes 'J. D. W.', he would say, '*They have all gone*'.

The tone was everything. I remember distinctly the discomfort of the first long night—for these were sessions that lasted until the sky began to lighten. Unused to his ways, I stood while he paced restlessly the big room, and smoked his cigars, longing to sit and smoke my own tobacco. I must have stood for hours: at any rate, the time seemed endless until, desperately, I flopped exhausted into a chair and defiantly lit my pipe. Lord Melchett went on walking, pausing before my chair in his rounds of the room with an explosive enquiry 'What?'

You waited for that 'What?' glad to think that, in the main, it was a rhetorical question and not for you to answer. Glad, for usually an answer was beyond your capacity.

When I told him later of my ordeal he said dryly, that among his friends he did not want the manners of the drawing-room! After that I never stood again and my hand went naturally to the cigar box.

But even sitting and smoking, these nights at Ffynone were

1910 exhausting, for Lord Melchett had none of the little conversations with which we rest our minds: he would pursue a theme ruthlessly, rejecting pleasanter and easier side tracks into which one would try to lure him. We are not used to such logical development of thought and ideas, we linger on the way, we grow tired, sometimes perhaps frightened when the subject begins to get larger than ourselves. But he had that courage of the intellect which scales undismayed the grandest and most formidable heights.

I was never able to discover his limitations. He was the most brilliant talker I have ever known. Once I thought I had him at a disadvantage when I had manœuvred the subject into the influence of Calvinism on the Welsh character; here at least, I could be the authority and he the listener. But no! Pinning me speedily to the fundamental things in John Calvin's Institutes, he was off, theorising and narrating, walking around the table without ceasing, and leaving me presently concerned vitally about my defences.

He had more than the average theologian's grip of theology. I found he had an intimate acquaintance with the Gospel of St John: I think it was its perfect Greek spirit that had captured the classical scholar and the artist in him. He was so devout a lover of Bach that a very large range of his works was his intimate possession. He had unerring artistic discernments: they were truer than his political insights, because they were more really part of him.

He lived continuously in the sight of a world hungry for news, he was always doing or saying something of interest, and value to that world: but for all this, he was, at heart, a lonely man.

Alfred Mond blossomed richly when he was thus alone with a friend. But his absentmindedness caused him many distresses upon public occasions, distresses which made him so nervous that he invariably became aggressive in self-defence and thus appeared at his worst.

There was an occasion when Mond's absent-mindedness attacked him in an unfortunate moment. During and after the war, he devoted imagination and energy to the making of the Imperial War Museum. He had as his colleague Sir Martin Conway,¹ whose scholarship and charm had long ago endeared him to Alfred Mond. The King was to open the Museum, then housed at the Crystal Palace. As Chairman of the Museum and First Commissioner of Works, Sir Alfred was to give a long address. He had poured feeling and earnest thought into the planning of the Museum; with Sir Martin Conway, he had dreamed of a collection which would exalt valour and record heroism, without perpetuating the vindictive hatred which had stood up between the countries engaged in the war. It was their wish from the beginning that even a German visitor to London might go through the Museum without suffering resentment or bitterness. The speech Sir Alfred had prepared for his King was planned upon this far-seeing theme, and, filled with his own passion, he stood up and began to speak. He forgot his manners and, stirred by his own thoughts, he turned his back on his Sovereign. Sir Martin Conway tugged at his coat-tails and he turned back towards the King, grieved and apologetic. His lapse was greeted with a smile which reassured him and he went on with his speech.

¹ Now Lord Conway of Allington.

CHAPTER XIX

I

1913 **S**IR ALFRED MOND'S intellectual forces received three separate inspirations in his life. The first had come when he was a boy in Italy. Stirred by the monuments of pagan Rome, he had seen the way of his life influenced and guided by the epic of worldly conquest.

Again and again through his industrial and political schemes he had turned back to the first freedom of his early twenties, when his whole being had escaped from the confines of his English life, to walk among the columns of the Forum and of Hadrian's villa, seeking for some key to his future. He had found it in the forms of Roman architecture and sculpture and in the courage of the men who had left this immortal stamp upon the city, upon the Campagna and in the Tivoli hills.

The conversation at the Palazzo had always been made exciting for him as a boy by the new excavations and he had never paused to study the Renaissance with more than a scholar's interest.

In 1913, Alfred Mond was drawn back to Rome because of Henrietta Herz's illness and, in the hours when he was not sitting beside his old friend, he went to the museums and galleries to increase his knowledge of the Rome of Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo and Raphael. Just as his own life was achieving colour and richness, superimposed upon form, so did he turn at this point in his development from the courageous forms

of the pagans, to the colour and richness which the 1913
painters of the Renaissance had added to the eternal
city.

As a boy, he had written no more than a few verses and notes to record the growth which came to him in Rome. They were still locked away in a beautiful leather box. Now that he had his wife and children in England, he was no longer obliged to be shy of his emotions: he shared this new inspiration, this new fullness which came to his intellect.

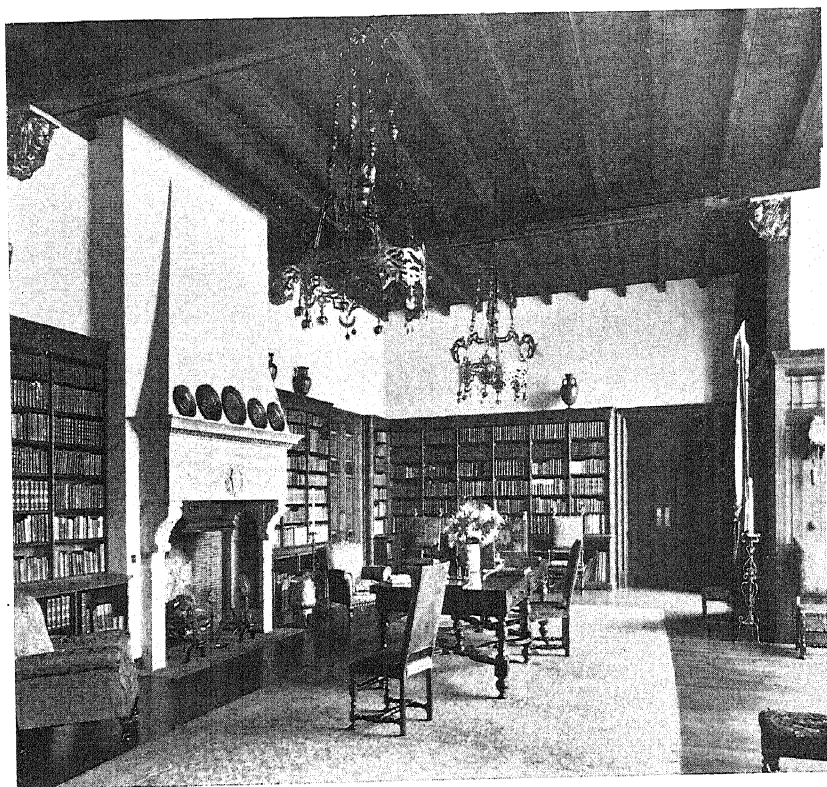
With these sensations came the closing of another chapter of his childhood. Henrietta Herz was dying: she sat up in her bed in the Palazzo, looking out over the roof-tops, listening to the bustle of life upon the Spanish steps, resenting the slow fading of her energies. Like his mother in London, she had become an old woman, making only occasional efforts to assert the strength which she had shown in the struggle at Winton. She would harangue the surgeon and refuse to see him; she would sit up in bed and send for Alfred. He would find her 'full of energy, her will indomitable, deciding each day whom she wanted to see and permitting no contradiction'. Towards the end, when pain drained her energies, she made one last protest. She jumped out of bed to evade the doctor when he sought to give her a morphia injection. Then she gave up the struggle and died.

Alfred Mond greeted the painters and scholars who came so anxiously to enquire of their patroness. He watched the last sad efforts she made at life and he wrote to Lady Mond: 'At the moment, there is a feeling of futility in all earthly things. When one has just seen

1913 life wrestling with death, the matters of this earth seem of small moment'.

There was a note of depression in his letters, but there was also a reaction from the practical interests of his existence, as if he were seeking for something new: some fresh fount of energy for his spirit and his mind.

He no longer went to Hadrian's villa. Again and again he went to the Sistine Chapel, the glory of Michael Angelo's ceiling spreading over him, the colour, the luxury of the inspiration stirring emotions which had never been touched in him by the older story. The Romans had made beauty for their own pleasure and through worship of themselves. The Renaissance painters had gone beyond this. They had made beauty through worship of something *outside* themselves, something more spiritual. It was this quality which had not yet appeared in anything Mond had written or said and which was at last awakening in him. He turned back to the life-story of Michael Angelo. He recalled the Florentine as a boy, being weaned to art under the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici; he saw him carving his first great Hercules, earnestly trying to show that sculpture must be more than the record of form; that it must be a translation of the artist's soul. Mond left the Palazzo day after day, wrestling between his duties to his dying friend and this world which was possessing him. He wrote of Michael Angelo going back to his beloved Florence, to prepare its defences; he wrote of him as an old, blind man, high up under the arches of the Sistine ceiling, painting year after year, making the living flesh grow out from the inanimate stone, curved and full and alive. He wrote of the development that



THE LIBRARY AT MELCHET COURT.

came to his artistic perceptions and of his own, deep 1913
spiritual response. 'The old Romans would have made
a ceiling as beautiful as this, but they would have left it
with its stone form.' He wrote, 'Michael Angelo made
the stone melt and disappear under his brush: he opened
up the roof of the Chapel, to show me the terrible
mystery of creation'.

II

In England, the circumstances of Sir Alfred's life had
fortunately formed themselves so that he could cele-
brate his complete acceptance of the Renaissance spirit.
He had bought a country house in Hampshire a year or
so before. It was set in a far-spreading park, rich with
countryside legends. The house was shorn of its
Victorian decoration when he returned to England: it
was ready, a new canvas upon which he could paint
whatever picture he chose. Into the great rooms of his
new house he poured treasures of the Renaissance.
His father's pictures were in the rooms, rich and
beautiful brocades and tapestries were stretched upon
the walls. As the years passed, Sir Alfred Mond and
his wife gathered new pictures and tapestries, painted
and carved chests, Greek marbles, vases of Majolica
and figures in bronze. They did more than this, for
they gave the house something of the spirit of the
glorious age, when art transcended human endeavour
and material limitations. They made Melchet Court
one of the most interesting Renaissance houses in
England.

Nourished by success, Alfred Mond's character
seemed to soften in this year. He had always been

1913 aggressive, aware of the resentment which he so often awakened, defending himself. But there was less reason for it now. Honours were coming to him. He was still a private member with only six years' experience of the Commons. He had been made a Baronet and a Privy Councillor. These elevations assured his social position and respect for his opinions. His many industrial chairmanships added another side to his security. From this security, he began to look upon the world in a different light. What had been intellectual concern for the lives of other people now had a deeper touch of humanity about it.

One of his first interests when he bought Melchet Court was the comfort of his workmen: even before his own house was ready. He was ill, in bed at Bad Gastein, but he wrote to Lady Mond: 'I want...to have all our property as good as it can be and all our people well housed. Don't you agree? We shall also, I think, have to consider wages. Some of the garden staff are, I feel, getting much below a living wage...'.

Then there came a more personal concern. His son was at school and he had failed to please his masters, so that they sent an official protest. The news was sent on to Sir Alfred. He wrote: 'I am still glad to have a healthy, fine, honest boy; with an open character, without vice....I am very anxious that he should not look upon himself as hopeless. I suffered many years of my life because my father looked upon me in that way. It merely discouraged me and gave me want of confidence and did not help me at all. And after all, I have not done so badly. I remember only too vividly when I failed in my tripos at Cambridge....I wanted to kill myself...'.

When his son arrived home from school, Alfred Mond put his arms around him and said nothing. 1913

The rôle of the grim parent was horrible to him and he was more inclined to condone than to correct the misdemeanours of his children. Breakfast alone with him, even on a day when he contemplated the Commons and the Office, was an uproarious delight. It began with six coffee cups, piled one on top of the other. His feat was to fill all of them, without ceasing to pour the coffee and without spilling any on the cloth. The results were always disastrous. Servants would appear and find him dancing with the coffee pot, a veritable fandango among the chairs. For the night-time, he had the stories of the gorilla in pink pyjamas, a character about which he wove romances enough to keep his children delighted until they grew beyond the age of listening to stories.

III

When Sir Alfred's friends asked him to put a curb upon his energies, he laughed and said, 'I would sooner live richly for ten years than moderately for twenty'. Some years before he had widened the scope of his campaigns, buying an interest in the *Westminster Gazette* and directing many aspects of its policy, as Chairman of the Board. He gave an evening every now and again to *The English Review*, delighted when the editor had found a fresh young poet or short story writer. He sent for new books from Germany and France, keeping his knowledge of their new literature as lively as that of his own country. This increase of interest in foreign countries awakened one fear in him:

1913 a fear which lay between the lines of an article he wrote for *Nord und Süd* in June of 1912. It was upon Anglo-German commercial relations, and he wrote:

England is Germany's largest customer, and Germany is England's largest customer....In these circumstances it is difficult to conceive how it can be contended that England is jealous of Germany's industrial development, as surely a businessman is always glad when he sees a good customer placed in a position to give him larger orders.

He said that it was most unreasonable that 'the two countries should rend each other for the advantage of their rivals....Any interruption of the trade between them would unquestionably result for both of them in a huge industrial and financial crisis'.

Moving from this bitter prophecy, he said that it was time that the business men of both countries, 'however reluctant they may be to enter the political field, should exercise their undoubted right to tell politicians and diplomats that a way must and shall be found to make a reality of our mutual desire for friendly relations'.

He saw in the rising of the industrialists against the politicians the one chance of binding the two countries together in commerce and industry, and freeing both of them from hysterical incitements to war and from the crushing financial burden of armaments.

Sir Alfred was drawn closer and closer into the government of his country. One of the compliments to the position he had achieved since his father's death came when Mr Lloyd George sought his opinions on the prospects of trade during the coming year. Mr Lloyd George said he wished for the information

‘with a view to framing my Estimates of Revenue in 1913 the forthcoming Budget’.¹

Indeed there was fullness in Mond's life now.

IV

It may be banal, but it is sadly true that there are ‘two ways of looking at a thing’. Indeed, bewildered in the confusion, we are often inclined to suppose this to be an understatement. The biographer must pause every now and then in telling his story and realise that biography is strictly divorced from hero worship: that it would be a sin to gild a statesman's halo and forget his feet of clay. There seems to be little evidence of Sir Alfred Mond's feet of clay in his correspondence, even in the very personal letters which he wrote to his family, letters which have not been withheld from the biographer. But clever journalists are too sharp to be hoodwinked by the apparent purity of human motives. They know. So they write. Fearful of a charge of bias, the biographer turns to the more severe journals of the day to find the most unkind picture of his subject. In this instance, he turns to the issue of *Truth* for July 22nd, 1913. The article upon Sir Alfred printed in this issue, under the heading of ‘Minor Statesmen’, is witty and searching, but even this sharp pen cannot leave Mond without mixing a little praise with its scoffing.

...Step by step, this simple son of the soil, not excluding alkali and its by-products, has mounted the ladder of fame....In Sir Alfred Mond and Sir David Brynmor Jones we see again the knights of old armed for tourney, whether in the Albert Hall,

¹ The Rt Hon. David Lloyd George, O.M., to Sir Alfred Mond, April 8th, 1914.

1913 the great grey courtyard of Criccieth Castle, or behind the massive portcullis of 35, Lowndes Square, S.W. At these jousts of fancy, the jewelled rapier, or it may be a trusty broadsword—for either may be hired when honours are at stake—clanks merrily against the booted spur, and as the courtly form of the doughty baronet threads the mazes of the quadrille and the minuet, flashes of magnesium fire immortalise the scene (see the *Tatler* back numbers). Sir Alfred Mond is, perhaps, the one social star in the Liberal constellation. As he glitters at midnight, in sequins and cloth of gold, he is the brilliant tail that wags the big bear.

Sir Alfred's social triumphs have never blinded him to the stern duties of commerce. He devotes much of his spare time to the noble science of remunerative chemistry. His specialities are nickel, gas, and the *Westminster Gazette*, and he is ready, like John Wesley, to take the whole world for his parish, or, as he would more humbly express it, his market. His mind works with childlike simplicity. All he does is to map out the solar system, and say to his competitors, 'Why should we be greedy? You take one continent—take it, by all means—and I'll be content with the rest'. There is no vulgar intrigue, as in the case of the Rockefellers, but just a friendly, sensible arrangement, mutually satisfactory to all parties. Everybody does well out of it. The shareholders, not excluding the Brunners and the Monds, receive as a slight recognition of their contributions to the comfort of the race, dividends which sometimes fall as low as 30 per cent. The employees are handsomely treated—good and regular wages, first class fares for managers on tour, no silly skimping.

...he is certainly a sledge-hammer on Protection. There is no finer sight in creation than the member for Swansea, standing in a full House with a beaming smile on his face, while he instructs Mr Bonar Law on the multiplication table and the geography of Canada. Somebody once said that it was intellect talking through the nose—a description too accurate to be quite kind. Not that Sir Alfred Mond would object, for it is one of his

virtues that he is entirely indifferent to petty personal insults. 1913 Knowledge, he would say, need not be *pretty*; it is *power*, especially when you get a patent before talking about it, and power without prettiness is the essential quality of Sir Alfred Mond's statesmanship. He is one of the few men in the House of Commons who would here and now buy up the railways. And with them he would throw in the land *at a price*. If he were at Downing Street, there would brood over all the Empire a thoroughly up-to-date benevolence. Sir Alfred Mond would be the Universal Secretary of State, with Consols at a premium. And if Germany became restive he would say, blandly, 'I know Germany better than right hon. and hon. gentlemen opposite'. (Loud ironical cheers.) 'If you want to settle with Germany, you must not fight her—that is stupid—you must buy her up.'

V

On August the fourth war was declared between 1914 England and Germany. War with any other country would have given Alfred Mond greater opportunities and would have increased his prestige. Within a few days he was in danger of being swept from his position of honour and power into being a suspect, a German and a Jew, a symbol for the hatred which was rising fantastically in every part of the country.

The *Daily Mail* immediately discovered Mond's second Christian name, Moritz, and printed it, with a statement that the British workman did not want 'Sir Alfred Mond to cry out for him'.

Somebody has said that war is the one emotion which can be shared by a whole nation. It may be shared, without being comprehended. The men who actually fight, come out of the hell with some strange stain upon their souls. They have seen the Holy Grail and they

1914 come wistfully back to their land and their people, to find that they no longer belong to them. Heroes for ever divorce themselves spiritually from the very people they go out to save. The nation may share the emotion of war, but, struggling with the new giant bending over them, the humble and unimaginative among them needs must seek strange and little ways of showing what they feel. Meek German butchers in suburbs were suspect. Any name which had not got the sweet tang of the English countryside about it was traced back to Frankfurt or Hamburg. England became war-minded.

A friend of power and influence came to Sir Alfred, anxious and afraid. There were other men of German origin in high places in England. His friend pleaded with Mond to follow their example and retire into the country. Another Director could be found for Brunner Mond. Another member could be found for Swansea. He could withdraw from the arena and wait. The war could not last very long. Within a little time, his relations were to be suspected of having concrete foundations for guns hidden in their houses. Within a little time, an hysterical neighbour was to force an official to call at Lowndes Square and ask why it was that Sir Alfred kept *carrier* pigeons in his garden.¹ These fantastic charges were inevitable among people full of war. His friend urged argument upon argument on him.

Mond listened with his head lowered. The very air of London smelled of war: the newspapers on his table were wild with headlines. When Mond looked up, he

¹ These were Hyde Park pigeons, which gathered in Sir Alfred's garden because they were fed there.

moved his head back and closed his eyes, as he often 1914
did before speaking. Then he said, 'You can all go to
hell. I won't go into the country. I shall go into the
Government instead'.

Within two years he was appointed First Com-
missioner of Works in the Coalition Government, and
five years afterwards he was Minister of Health.

CHAPTER XX

I

1914 **ALFRED MOND** did not falter for a second in establishing his attitude when war was declared. His mother stirred anxiously in the library at 'The Poplars'. She thought of the tortured Rhineland and the soldiers marching through the streets of Cologne. For her, the coming years would be terrible. Her sons consoled her, but Alfred showed no anxiety over his own position. Had he done so, perhaps he would have been relegated to the backwater which was filled by the pathetic Anglo-Germans who so quickly became estranged in their adopted country.

There were protests against Mond in the world outside. Newspapers were rude to him and he was viewed with suspicion by those who did not know him. But he did not seem to notice these difficulties. At least he ignored them. On the very day when his friend appealed to him to withdraw into the country, when London throbbed with the first excitement of the declaration, when the people pressed against the railings of Buckingham Palace, discovering some symbolism of safety, some elucidation of a mystery behind the expressionless face of stone, Mond went to his desk and tackled his problem lustily. 'Abnormal times require abnormal remedies', he said, never pausing to be melodramatic in a season which called for common sense. On the day that war was declared, he wrote a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer: a letter which an-

anticipated the later solution of the vital currency problems. 1914

My dear George,

I don't know whether you realise the feeling of panic which has been engendered by the entirely unnecessary difficulty created by the absence of smaller currency and also by the prolonging of the bank holiday. £5 notes are unchangeable in London, Railway Companies refuse to change them at the booking offices, they are refused at shops and hotels and, to my amazement, I find that the Government Post office is adding to the trouble by refusing to give change for these notes. This latter step is most serious and, to my mind, criminal, for it creates the idea that the Government itself is in doubt about the solvency of the Bank of England.

If this state of affairs continues for another day or two, it will create a quite unnecessary critical situation. Either the Bank must be forced to renew gold payment or an alternative plan must be found. Surely the enlargement of the silver currency is not difficult and would probably meet the requirements. A paper issue of £1 notes should also be made. The trouble is one of change, not of confidence. But one will engender the other.... I send this note to you in the middle of your worries, but I consider it a very serious matter.

August 4th, 1914.

Mond was in his element because he had much to do. While he wrestled with the abnormalities of finance, Lady Mond, in common with the women of the country, swept her own domestic life aside to give both her London and her country houses to the abnormal services of the time. She converted Melchet Court into a Hospital and she opened her London house to Belgian Refugees. At night Sir Alfred would return home and talk to the Belgians: an engineer, a group of frightened

1914 servant girls from Liège and a painter from Maubeuge. The strange unsettled company changed from day to day. Sir Alfred would never go to his room without pausing to cheer them...somebody has told the author that he would stand in the room, sorting his letters. Most of those dropped through the door of Lowndes Square were anonymous. The servants would stand at the window and watch the writers come up to the door, some self-righteous and brave, some meanly. They would drop their envelopes through the letter-box and go away without ringing the bell. Lady Mond had already withdrawn these letters and destroyed them by the time Sir Alfred arrived home. The other letters he would read, carrying on a cheerful conversation with his unfortunate guests, refreshing them with his own reminiscences of Belgium, reviving their hopes, which had sunk so sadly during the day.

He bombarded the Government with ideas and saw many of them adopted. He took up the cause of the Joint-Stock Banks with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, supporting their complaints against the Bank of England for the way in which it was dealing with the accumulation of Foreign Bills. 'It seems a thousand pities', he wrote to Mr Lloyd George, 'that the old jealousy between the Bank of England and the Stock Banks should be allowed to interfere at such a critical moment when we want the machinery to run smoothly.'

The exigencies which fell about Mr Lloyd George merely refreshed him to new power. One of his first safeguards against disasters was the appointment of an Advisory Committee of Bankers and Traders to keep industry alive and prevent economic deadlocks. Sir

Alfred was appointed to this committee and he found 1914
a fertile field for his ideas.

The war inspired Mr Lloyd George to greatness. He seemed to flourish and grow in mental stature overnight. Sir Alfred made a record of one incident which shows the Chancellor of the Exchequer transcending human limitations in anticipating the proportions of the war. The bankers were withering under the fears which beset them. They had already discouraged industry by reducing overdrafts. Their next fright was over the Foreign Bills of Exchange which they were holding, representing three hundred and fifty million pounds, and which could not be liquidated. The bankers took their fear to Mr Lloyd George and he decided that the Government should take over the Bills. On the day of his decision Sir Alfred said, 'This is very brave! Why did you decide to do it?'

Mr Lloyd George answered. 'Well, I thought it out while I was in my bath this morning. It is certain that this war is going to cost a great deal of money and three hundred and fifty millions are not going to figure in that cost, either one way or the other.'

The new tangles in economics were thrilling to a man of Mond's character and mind. He chuckled at the excitement of experiment, and he was never backward with a plan when private or public financiers came to him for advice. One man who grumbled sadly to him was Sir Robert Houston. They met in the Lobby of the House and Sir Robert complained about the Banks because he was not allowed to draw out his treasure of many tens of thousands of sovereigns which he had hoarded against such rainy days as these. 'Ah,' said

1914 Sir Alfred, 'that is economics. I told you to come off the gold standard long ago. You see, Houston, you cannot get your gold out because I am borrowing it from the banks to pay my workmen.'

II

One interesting anomaly in Sir Alfred's rules of living was his abstemiousness over the drinking of alcohol. He once said 'A man thinks he can make love to a woman on a glass of champagne. He is a fool. It merely blunts his sensitiveness'. His Jewish blood gave him sensuous delight over most of the pleasures of life: his love of beauty was closely knit with his emotions. Sometimes his humour enjoyed Rabelaisian candour. He was tender with shy or little people. But if a pretender attacked him, a devilish naughtiness would stir in his mind. Then he would sit at the dinner-table, silent, his head lowered over his plate.

One such occasion was when a clergyman's wife was imposed upon him for lunch at Melchet when he was busy and short of temper. She attacked him with a horrible description of the Armenian atrocities. His head was lowered and he was silent for five minutes. The metallic voice clattered on to a description of the violation of the Armenian women. Sir Alfred was at last stirred. He raised his head and said in his slow, gruff voice, 'They like it'.

This breadth of humour and the kindly manner of a thoughtful host went with a curious austerity over the drinking of alcohol. He would crack a bottle of wine to celebrate an occasion, but, in his life from day to day, he often left his wine-glass untouched upon the table.

Prohibition had been one of the planks of his platform 1914 when he contested the Salford seat, in his political adolescence. The prejudice never left him. His feeling was expressed abruptly one day in the House when he saw a young member fortifying himself for a coming speech with a drink or two. 'You are no man if you cannot hold the House of Commons without a drink', he said.

On April 8th, 1916, Lord Hugh Cecil protested in *The Times* against the prohibition of the sale of alcoholic liquor. Sir Alfred wrote a letter to *The Times*¹ in which he gave full play to his prejudice.

He wrote:

...Lord Hugh Cecil, like others not accustomed to the working of industrial enterprise, does not appear to realise that in engineering and ship-building works especially, the efficiency of a whole gang may be impaired owing to the absence of several of its members or through some of them being unable to take their fair share in the work. Nor does he apparently realise, like many others who are not daily faced by the problem, how small, relatively, is our number of skilled workers, how difficult and indeed impossible it is to increase their number, and how, if he could improve the efficiency of the 100,000 men he speaks of, by even thirty per cent., we would thereby secure the equivalent of an additional force of 30,000 skilled men for work in our ammunition factories....

He despised the half-way measures of the reformers who were afraid of ruthless legislation. He despised the 'tinkering with hours of opening' and 'systems of cards for limited quantities of drink and all other fancy devices created by ingenious minds who prefer anything to facing the real issue fairly and squarely'.

¹ The letter was not published.

1914 Sir Alfred begged for complete prohibition. 'The stimulating effect which such a great act of renunciation would have upon our allies, the impression of serious purpose which it would create among neutral nations, and the proof which it would give to the enemy of our firm determination to carry the war to a successful close, at all costs, are in themselves important factors not to be over-looked. They are surely more worthy of consideration than abstract propositions regarding enforced sobriety or chastity....'

Mond's temperance arose from an obsession over the waste of energy which can be traced in many of his opinions. Indeed, the obsession sometimes assumed the form of eccentricity. He disliked the sea for a reason which was a mystery to his family until one day when his son stood next to him on the deck of an Atlantic liner. Looking out over the water Sir Alfred said, 'I have always disliked watching the movement of the ocean. Ever since I was young I have been appalled by the waste of energy and effort'.

Perhaps this slim evidence adds to the proof that his objection to excess of alcohol was purely economic.

III

1916 In public speaking and in political life, the influence of a brilliant intellect is limited by the capacity of the average. No matter how clear his thought, how illuminated his prophecy and how immaculately his words are chosen, they fall upon stony ground unless he has men of equal qualities to listen to him. In public life, one is continually pouring champagne into egg-cups.

His war speeches show that Sir Alfred Mond was



VIOLET, LADY MELCHETT

very often in this sad relationship with his listeners. 1916
He would speak in the House and be followed by critics who simply did not understand him: men to whom simple words were confusing.

One instance will serve to prove this. In a debate in the House on January 10th, 1916, Sir Alfred said that the German ambitions which began the war were racial and imperialistic and *not* economic. Mr Shirley Benn followed him and said that he 'entirely' disagreed with Sir Alfred and that the truth was that Germany began the war so that she 'might march forward to...the domination of the nations of the world'. Exactly what Sir Alfred had said a few minutes before.

In Committee and in the House, Mond urged changes which showed how alive he was to every condition and every abnormality of the time. In March of 1916, he urged 'some cessation of a certain amount of industries' so that men would be free for active service, and that, from a register of industries, the 'Government should decide what industries they wished to be carried on'. It was a novel suggestion to come from an industrialist. He pressed the Commons not to divorce the military and economic aspects of the war and to realise their inevitable relationship, '...a military defeat ruins your credit...to think that you can separate the military aspect of your campaign from the others is a manifest absurdity'. He wove the economic threads so closely into the conflict that he slowly became recognised as one of the men who were seeing far ahead: seeing the economic war which would come when the soldiers were withdrawn from France and peace came again. His opinions and capacity in such matters were

1916 recognised when Lord Balfour of Burleigh's Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy was formed to consider the post-war economic problems. Mond served upon this committee until Mr Lloyd George appointed him to his Coalition Ministry in 1916.

Sir Alfred was one of the men most dissatisfied with the Asquith Coalition. He wrote: 'The habit of allowing the patriotism of the nation to make good the inertia of the Government has become only too characteristic of our whole conduct of the war'.¹ Sometimes, one feels, in reading the pages of Hansard, that he was a little too impatient and ruthless in the way he dug his spurs into the Coalition. He was as unsparing in digging the spurs into himself. He raised two or three battalions, he accepted and encouraged inventions of concentrated foods, Tommy's cookers and motor headquarters.

During this year, he made his first journey to the battlefields. A few months before, his sixteen-year old son had appeared before him at Lowndes Square, with the threat that if his father did not get him a commission, he would run away and enlist. Melchet Court was full of returned wounded men by then and the boy had been caught up in the excitement of their stories. He had already ruined his father's best hunter while despatch riding in Hampshire.

It was typical of Mond that he made no more than a faint demur and that, convinced of his son's eagerness, he helped him to lie about his age and to get his commission. In 1916, Henry Mond was an officer with a Brigade Trench Mortar battery of the 38th Welsh

¹ *Reynolds Newspaper*, February 13th, 1916.

Division. Sir Ivor Phillips was Divisional General and 1916 Captain Gwilym Lloyd George was his A.D.C. Sir Alfred Mond crossed to France to stay with them in the early months of 1916 and thus he saw his son on service.

It was not enough for him that his father should see war from the safety of Headquarters or sitting in the garden of a château, talking with Haig and his staff. So Henry Mond decided to send his father back to England with some real experience to enrich his politics. He borrowed the General's car and took Sir Alfred to the nearest point for traffic to the front line. From there they walked, not through the communication trenches, where Mond knew that his father would see nothing. Without announcing the dangers, he took him by a shorter route which was frequently used by individuals and parties of two. The route led through the village of Richbourg St Vaast and then along the high road in full view of the enemy. The German trenches were five hundred yards away.

'There are the trenches', said young Mond.

'Which trenches?' asked Sir Alfred.

'The German trenches', he was told.

'My God, what do we do if they fire on us?'

'They never bother to fire on parties of less than three', answered his son. 'But if they do fire, we can duck into one of those.' He indicated a series of stinking pools.

His father was a little shaken, but he walked on and they came to the communication trench. They clambered down and walked nearer and nearer to the line. At last they came to a strong post from which they could see the enemy trenches if, at the same time, they

1916 were willing to attract an enemy bullet. Henry Mond knew this, but he knew also that by pulling his father back quickly, the enemy bullet would pass innocently by.

He said, 'If you stand on the fire step, you can see the enemy lines'.

So Alfred Mond stood up and had one fleeting glimpse of the Germans. His son pulled him down sharply, a few seconds before a bullet cracked past.

'What is that?' he asked.

'A German bullet', answered his son.

'Who are they shooting at?'

'You', he was told.

Suddenly a fine and primitive passion possessed him. 'Where is a bloody rifle, I am going to have just one shot back.'

His son led him away. Sir Alfred returned to Westminster inspired by terrible strength and ideas. He said, in a speech to his electors, 'I care not what views a man expressed before the war broke out, or what views he is going to express when the war ceases. I say for God's sake let us all join to win the war, and when we have won it there will be time enough, if we have the inclination, to return to the quarrels of the past.

'...We have to realise our enemy's cunning; there has been too much killing our opponent with the mouth instead of with the bullet.'

CHAPTER XXI

I

SIR ALFRED MOND became as impatient of 1916 the Coalition leaders as he had been impatient with the older Tories, whose power his party had usurped ten years before. Sometimes he was bitter and often he was intolerant in his attacks in the Commons, but he had a uncanny talent for supporting his criticisms with indisputable evidence. If he had a poor opinion of Haig and thought his despatches to be 'uninteresting and uninspiring', it was because he had met Haig and because he had read the despatches and studied them in relation to the conflict. If he attacked Mr Snowden, he did it with figures which made his argument seem to be conclusive. Mond's aggressive manner sometimes awakened resentment as well as conviction in the House. Few liked him, but most of the Members respected his talents. He was not a man to awaken affection in any but the few; indeed, he put up deliberate defences against friendship. He once said that, to be a good mixer in a social circle, was to bow to crowd psychology, which drained the mind of originality and audacity. In a few people, he awakened an adoration which has been poured upon the biographer, two years after his death. His lack of physical grace and the brusqueness of his manner had long ago forced him to build up barriers of social defence. They appeared in the form of what seemed like arrogance, and neither the brilliance of his intellect nor the kindness of his heart was fully apparent in his address.

1916 Sometimes Mond would throw his cynical defences aside and show the true depths of his justice and understanding. He was the friend of the weak and the unfortunate. His hands were clenched in battle, but they never withheld sympathy or charity from those who suffered. Even the conscientious objector, dithering with indecision, a man for whom Mond had never had 'very great sympathy', made him pause in his judgment and try to understand. Fierce fighter that he was, Mond thought that the conscientious objector should be allowed to work in ammunition factories. He was ruthlessly cruel in intellectual battle and he was intolerant of humbug and stupidity. But he lived in perpetual fear of hurting little people or children. 'Take great care how you punish a child', he said to his son. 'A child is a mystery and you must not dare to give it a sense of injustice.'

II

During 1916, England's discontent with the ineffectual Asquith Coalition burst into demonstration. Mond said that Asquith and Lord Grey had been the right men to represent the country in the dignified approach to war. They had been able to enter upon the deadly business without besmirching the prestige of the Government. But they were the calm gentlemen of peace, the fine inheritance of British culture and statesmanship. They smelled of English lavender, whereas a time had come when leaders must smell of blood. War was an abnormal state and it called for abnormal men. It called for as much passion in Westminster as in France; for as much courage in government and legislation as in battle. Again and again, while Asquith's Coalition Cabinet

trod gently over the battlefield, Mond rose in the House 1916 and protested. He wanted ruthless legislation in regard to the sale of alcohol; he wanted conscription, definite and severe, without nervous half-measures. He introduced the bill for the rejection of all contracts between landlords and soldiers. As ever, his sympathy and energy were given to the working man. He drew a comparison between the forlorn landlords of France and those of England, and he said that the English landlords should consider themselves fortunate if they had any houses left to let after the war.

Sir Alfred would return to his family, exasperated by what he called 'the old, peace-time method of muddling through'. He said that a country at war was not safe in the hands of High Tories, whether they were the true Tories of the Asquith Coalition or the once brave Liberals, who had drawn in their horns when a real conflict surrounded them. When the feeling of the House became fully strained and when a change from the Asquith Government seemed inevitable, Sir Alfred said, 'I think that there could be a greater evil even than a General Election. That is a Government and a House of Commons divorced from the general feeling of the people of the country'.¹

He was not alone, nor was he the first to desire a stronger hand in legislation. But he was among the first and the brave in forming the Liberal Ginger group, which brought the Lloyd George Coalition into power. He said, in the earliest phases of the war, that 'the passionate Welshman' was the only man who could capture the abnormal imagination of the British people

¹ Hansard, May 2nd, 1916, col. 2625.

1916 at war and, holding that imagination, 'be able to turn it into confidence and faith'.

The dissatisfaction over the Asquith Administration brought about the inevitable change at the end of 1916. Asquith made his last, dignified, speech as Prime Minister. It was the voice of the past, speaking to a generation which demanded more virile, more ruthless systems of government. However middle-class his origin and academic his outlook upon life, Asquith had come to represent the English gentleman in the House of Commons. In a time of narrow suffrage, the traditions of his kind lay gently over politics, like a pall. But the day of broader suffrage was coming: England, exalted and vitalised by war, demanded less manners and more blood in its government. Asquith withdrew, with the mien of a veteran, and, unrestrained by tradition, the fiery figure of Mr Lloyd George rose in the guise of a greater leader. 'Diplomacy be damned, let us have results.' It was the moment for such a leader, and the winning of the war was begun.

As Prime Minister, Mr Lloyd George demanded a more vigorous ministry. It was natural that he should wish Alfred Mond as a colleague. They had walked on the long terrace at Melchet together, deploring the lethargic pace of government and planning the changes which were to come when Asquith was retired. Mond had been one of those who urged him to take the Premiership, at first, it is said, against his own wishes. There is a difference of opinion as to Mr Lloyd George's motives at this time, but Mond said that he did not take the honour and responsibility of leadership with any eagerness at first; his friends had to force many argu-

ments upon him before he agreed. Lord Beaverbrook 1916 has recalled the scene which followed the day when Bonar Law went to the King and said that Mr Lloyd George was 'the man whose leadership was most likely to win the war'. Mr Lloyd George had said, 'No, I don't want to be Premier, I have not been fighting for the Premiership, but simply to get rid of the Asquith incubus'. Somebody might have murmured here Casca's remark when Julius Caesar put aside the crown when it was offered to him, '...to my thinking, he was very loth to lay his fingers off it'. Sir Alfred's idea of a courageous legislation for war was also the idea of Mr Lloyd George. They were both men of quick action. It was therefore reasonable that the new Prime Minister should advance the name of his Liberal colleague when the Cabinet changes came before him. The great reconstruction of the Government belongs to a broader field of political history than is necessary in this story, but the conditions leading up to Sir Alfred's appointment to the Office of Works are of interest, especially as we have a record of them from Mr Lloyd George himself.¹

Yes, I put Mond into two jobs in the Coalition administration. There were great prejudices against him and I had to contend with these prejudices. There was very nearly a Conservative revolt when I put him into the Government. I was also putting Winston Churchill into the Government and Bonar Law said to me, 'You can't put them both in'. Winston Churchill's failure over the Dardanelles was still remembered. The Conservatives said that Mond was a German Jew. The stupid people had talked of his house and its concrete emplacements for guns. The story had been exposed, but the Tory mind does not react

¹ Recounted to the author by Mr Lloyd George, in an interview.

Alfred Mond

1916 quickly to an exposure of calumny. Bonar Law said to me, 'You can't carry both Winston and Mond'. Some time afterwards, when I did put Winston in, he said, 'I don't know whether we will survive'.

III

1917 When Sir Alfred became First Commissioner of Works, he began his duties with a male staff which had been depleted from two thousand to less than a thousand, because of the men who had joined the forces. In the beginning, the conventional, public servant under him considered his methods to be sweeping and disturbing. In the first days, the usual long reports were placed in front of him. He swept them aside and demanded an entirely new kind of document. He grunted once and said, 'The whole Book of Revelation occupies ten pages. I don't see why new wash basins in the Revenue Office at Leeds should take a hundred pages. Take it away and bring me a short one, without details. It is for you to worry about those'.

There were frowns and surprises among members of the staff at first, but gradually they came to understand his methods, and he drew their loyalty and support about him, as he blew the cobwebs away. His approach to the office was that of a business man, not a politician. One of the chief men on his staff has said, 'He knew how to run a big office: that was the essence of his strength'. Mond fought against what he considered to be the false power of the Accountants and the Treasury control, and, as he had always ruled in his own business, he would not allow the Accountants to influence or to dictate policy. And he tried to rid his staff of the fear of Parliamentary questions: the consideration of affairs,

not upon their own merits, but in the light of a debate 1917
in the House. Two years before Mond's appointment,
the food shortage had brought forth a suggestion that
the Royal parks should be ploughed to produce crops.
The idea had been filed away. Sir Alfred brought it
out again and put it into practice. He ploughed up
Bushey and Richmond Parks and he sowed wheat and
oats. When he was asked if this was economical, he
said he did not know and that he did not care. All
that he knew was that the people wanted food.
Economy could wait. But he was shrewd enough
to see that the plots *did* show a profit. He cleared the
flowers out of the glass-houses in Hyde Park and grew
vegetables. He ploughed more land and he employed
expert gardeners, to be on duty in the parks to
advise the owners of small suburban gardens how to
obtain the most from their soil. He prepared leaflets
and he gave them away to any householder who went
to see his market gardens in the parks. With charac-
teristic foresight, he also made records of the turf and
the soil, anticipating the day when the need for the
vegetables would pass and another Commissioner of
Works would be obliged to undo the work he had done.
The quiet Orangery of Kensington Gardens, in which
Queen Victoria had played as a child, was turned into
a propagating ground for broccoli and kale and savoys.
Sir Alfred raised many smiles with his market gardens,
but he stimulated almost every owner of a pocket hand-
kerchief of garden to realise what could be done to
produce his own vegetables.

IV

1917 To the biographer, who has been obliged to study the Victorian tradition of statesmanship and to whom the contemporary House of Commons has never been more than a secondary interest, there are many surprises in reading Hansard for the years of the war. The note of enlightenment in the debates sometimes seems to belong to the time of the Crimean War. It seems that the magnitude of the Great War was apparent to only a few of the members. But their lack of imagination did not prevent them from contributing to the debates. The biographer suffers a second surprise in the purely destructive criticism of the big number of members who chose the back door to newspaper popularity by asking questions: the slick and easy way by which a member may satisfy his electors. Like all the other members of the Government, Sir Alfred Mond was obliged to squander time upon members who abused the privilege of Question Time by not assuring themselves of the accuracy of their information before asking questions.

Sir Alfred's object in ploughing and planting plots in Bushey and Richmond Parks seems to be simple and obvious. He wished to encourage people to combat the food shortage by planting their lawns and garden plots. The economic aspect of his experiment was of little importance. He spoke of his own purpose in April of 1918, when a member asked searching questions about the profits from Bushey. Sir Alfred answered:

There is a net profit of £105. That is not a bad profit... I did not take up these operations to make money but to provide

food, and I would remind hon. members that any food produced 1917
in this country and any tonnage saved is of value during the
present time. It reminds me of a story I heard *many years ago*
of an unsuspecting southerner who met a drover in Scotland
driving his beasts to the local market. He asked the price which
would be obtained and then informed the drover that he could
get three times the price at Smithfield. The drover looked at
him very scornfully and replied, 'And if you had Loch Lomond
in Hell, it would be worth a guinea a drop'.¹

Mr Hogge then made his contribution to the debate
by saying 'A very old story', which was exactly what
Sir Alfred had said when he referred to the story as one
he had heard many years before. On the same day,
Mr Hogge spoke again upon the question of opening
the British Museum to visitors while it was being used
as an emergency Government office. He said, 'I do not
mind confessing that I have never been in the British
Museum in my life, *which shows that one can get on*
without the British Museum...'. Thus were the serious
efforts of Ministers criticised and thus was their time
wasted.

Among those who supported Sir Alfred in the Office
of Works was his chief architect, Sir Frank Baines, a
man of disquieting candour, in whom Sir Alfred found
all that he desired: frankness, imagination, courage, and
a taste for argument. This was the raw material from
which Mond made his friends. Stimulated by his dis-
arming honesty and delighted over his unconventional
eagerness in any new scheme, Sir Alfred found in
Baines the ally he needed. Together they wrestled with
the abnormal building schemes which were thrust upon

¹ Hansard, April 18th, 1918, column 585.

Alfred Mond

1917 them. Sir Frank Baines has described Mond's work during these first years of office:

He found his Department engaged on war work of the most vital character. A vast programme of factories for gun ammunition filling was in being, the Department's professional staff being, in effect, attached to the Ministry of Munitions, to help Sir Eric Geddes and others with their programme of construction work. The volume of work was already immense, but as a result of the First Commissioner's intervention, more and more of the Departments of State, and new Departments created by the war, came to him for the assistance of his technical staff.... The constructional work was of every kind: air-craft works, jetties, Government grain stores, huge factories, hospitals and camps. He expected his staff to show the utmost initiative in utilising alternative materials and in improvising new methods to suit the abnormal conditions of the time.... When difficulties arose with local Committees of Management, which had been given powers of control over certain factories by the Ministry of Munitions, he would make personal visits to the sites, interview the Committees and clear away all difficulties.... When new, vast factories were planned, he would give hours of his time to his officers, discussing the lay-out, plans and details, pointing out possible bottle-necks in the schemes.... It is not too much to say that the heads of his professional staff, who were privileged to see and know him, grew to have the most profound admiration and respect... and in some cases, affection, for him.

Sir Frank Baines saw a side of Mond's achievement which was hidden from the public. Sir Alfred had been accustomed to technicians and architects and builders. In industry he had always scorned agents between himself and his practical staff, and now he insisted upon the same principle in dealing with the Government architects and builders. He would work

upon plans with his architects, elucidating their problems. He had a blessed gift. He could help his staff without hindering them: he could criticise them without interfering with them. This endeared him to the permanent officials and increased his power. 1917

He saw one tyranny in the administration and immediately removed it. The Secretariat stood between the technicians and the Treasury. The Secretariat was the power which prepared the plans of the technicians for the Commons. Sir Alfred did much to distribute power more evenly in the two departments, and was quick to impress upon the permanent officials that administrative officials must regard themselves as intermediaries and not as authorities, in the business of translating technical problems into action. He insisted upon seeing the plans and works of the technicians, and not merely the reports upon those plans drawn up by secretaries and accountants. The permanent officials had very often to curb Mond's enthusiasm. But the change of a Minister who needed curbing, instead of spurring, was refreshing to them.

The control of his staff delighted and inspired Sir Alfred. The most conventional civil servants admitted his genius for governing a big staff, varying in class, ability and temper. Labour difficulties tantalised all Ministers and Departments during the latter part of the war. 'Sir Alfred', continues Sir Frank Baines in his memorandum, 'showed a flair for dealing with the most awkward situation.'

Anticipating his work with the Melchett-Turner Conference, which was the bravest effort ever made to bring employer and employee together, he believed, while he was in the Office of

Alfred Mond

1917 Works, that the only solution of these later war problems was a closer association between the Works Councils and the Trades Union Officials, controlling labour. When news of discontent was brought to him, he always ordered his officials to go to the site or to the factory where the trouble was brewing. There, in direct conference with the Trades Union officials, the problems could be discussed over a table. This was an original and refreshing state of affairs in a Government office.

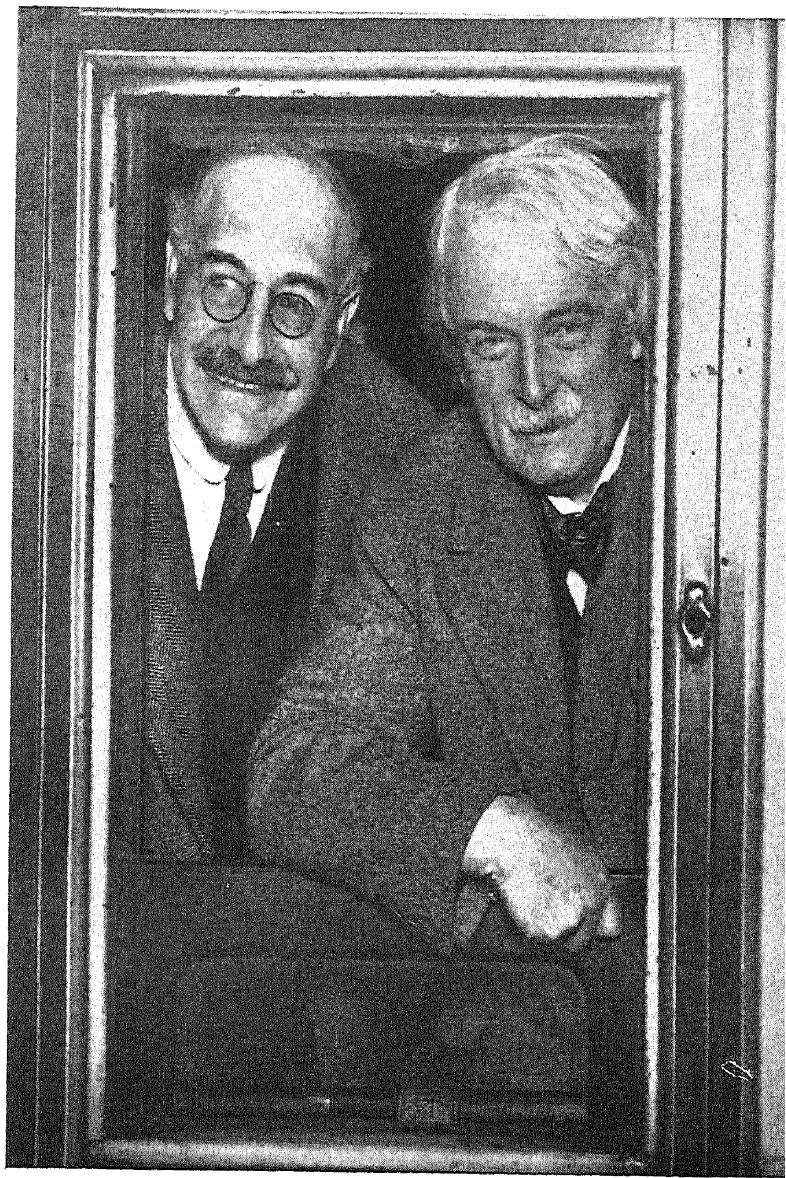
Sir Alfred was not prepared to consider problems from paper statements and reports alone. He insisted on visiting the buildings and factories, familiarising himself with the problem on the spot. My memory of him is not of a Minister sitting in his office in Whitehall, so much as that of an eager and energetic man, scrambling among scaffolding and exploring from roof to foundations of the work in hand. Only then would he announce a decision.

Once he spoke to me of making decisions. He said that the important thing for a Minister was not to give decisions, but to give RIGHT decisions. He never neglected the opportunity to obtain first-hand information so that he could do this.

When his wishes and instructions were not carried out with sufficient exactitude and efficiency, he was a most severe master. When he considered that work was well done, no one was more generous in his appreciation....

One of Sir Alfred's abnormal duties came with the explosion which destroyed the Silvertown works in the East End of London. Again he was unjustly criticised in the House. Before the war, Brunner, Mond and Co. manufactured soda crystals at Silvertown. When war was declared, the Government needed big supplies of T.N.T. for the navy and Messrs Brunner, Mond and Co. were asked to adapt the works for this purpose.¹ They

¹ Lord Melchett described this work when he addressed the Chemical Industry Conference in May of 1928. He said, '...during



SIR ALFRED MOND AND MR. DAVID LLOYD GEORGE.

The Silvertown explosion

did this as a temporary measure. Silvertown works were 1917 surrounded by a thickly populated area, and as T.N.T. was a vicious explosive, they felt the danger more and more. Eventually, when other T.N.T. factories were completed, Messrs Brunner, Mond and Co. approached the Government and asked to be released from their Silvertown agreement. This the Government refused to do, and Brunner, Mond and Co. wrote disclaiming all further responsibility and warning them of the danger. When the explosion eventually occurred, killing about forty people and wrecking eight hundred houses, bitter criticism fell upon Sir Alfred and his industrial colleagues. Mond's action was swift and characteristic. He did not pause to answer his critics, as a Minister he had neither authority over nor responsibility for the activities of Messrs Brunner, Mond and Co.

Two thousand people were homeless, in midwinter, and the devastation and misery were terrible. Six days after the explosion, Sir Alfred had completed the plans for the whole work of reconstruction. In little more

the war, this country was in a very serious condition in regard to high explosives...an explosive which was practically unused by us in the early days of the war, became the chief explosive of ourselves and our Allies....It was a question of turning out T.N.T., and methods had to be devised in which tonnage replaced pounds....In the manufacture of ammonium nitrate, no method had previously been known of producing it in hundreds of tons...all we could find were the text-books which said the various methods had been tried but that they had been unsuccessful. We had on our staff...an eminent and distinguished scientist in the person of Captain Freeth ...he applied the theoretical work of Willard Gibbs to the practical problem of production on a large scale and helped us to work out a process to produce thousands of tons, and, I can say without exaggeration, saved the Allied Forces in the field'.

1917 than six weeks, the houses were almost rebuilt. Ninety-four acres of plastering and almost two hundred miles of slating battens were used.

Within three months of his appointment to the Office of Works, two hundred extensions and new offices were constructed for the Revenue Office, to cope with the changes in the Income Tax. Seven million pounds were spent upon ammunition factories, filling factories and shell stores. Depots costing one million pounds were built, gun and searchlight stations costing a quarter of a million and housing schemes involving almost one million pounds were begun. The organisation and economy with which Sir Alfred Mond completed these buildings was almost generally praised. Mr Lloyd George said of him that 'No better business brain has ever been placed at the disposal of the State in high office than that of Sir Alfred Mond.... We all relied upon his great business experience, upon his extraordinary instinct and upon something that not all business men can always claim—his extraordinary breadth and his business vision; his extraordinary knowledge of other lands as well as his own'. Mr Lloyd George paid Mond this compliment in November of 1922, and he added that 'it was impossible to find a shadow of criticism against the administration of his work'.

When Sir Alfred made his first report to the House upon his Department, he was able to recite an overwhelming list of achievements, and to add that, with the increased cost of labour and material and all the exigencies of war, he had in some cases been able to bring the running cost of building down below the pre-war figure.

There was something almost exasperating about his speed and his efficiency. His impatience increased with his responsibility. On the occasion when he discussed the removal of the grille from the Ladies' Gallery, a small number of members appeared in the Commons to listen to him. They asked that the question should be postponed because of the small representation. He whipped out his statement that he could not 'adopt the doctrine that Ministers are not to act because members do not attend'. He added that he had 'enough authority to remove the grille on his own action'. The members breathed *Oh!*, which Hansard recorded. 1917

One day in the House somebody asked for a report on the fees charged for visiting the Tower of London. It was a question which might call for waste of time and useless enquiries. Alfred Mond stood up. 'In answer to the Right Honourable Gentleman, I beg to say that the fee to the Bloody Tower is sixpence.' He had his own way of saving time.

His methods were surprising also to the journalist. A writer in the *Saturday Review* said:

Sir Alfred Mond is the most astounding Minister whom we have ever heard of or dealt with, and that is saying a great deal. A certain thing was asked by us to be done for the benefit and enjoyment of the public, namely the keeping open of Kensington Gardens to a later hour than heretofore in the summer evenings. The request was made through Sir Alfred Mond, as First Commissioner of Works, and the really astonishing fact is that the thing was done and done quickly. Now, on May 16, the gardens are open to 9.15.

Really, if this kind of complacency is continued in public offices, there is no telling where it may stop. The Post-Master General may take to doing things, even to the punctual delivery

Alfred Mond

1917 of our letters. The War Office may take to answering officers' petitions politely and promptly. The Inland Revenue Authorities may condescend to repay excessive Income Tax in less than six months. In short, Sir Alfred Mond has set an awful example.

The arguments of the period of Sir Alfred's term of office as First Commissioner of Works have lost much of their interest now. Much of the work he did was temporary because of the war. But he secured Stonehenge for the nation, and he restored and preserved Westminster Hall, without destroying either its form or its spirit. The most interesting memorials to his control of the Department are the war graves and memorials which he built in France, the War Museum, the War Memorial in Edinburgh, and the Cenotaph: all memorials which are free from smallness, meanness or anger. The Cenotaph and the War Museum were designed in a time when mass passions were twisted and when human nature was suffering in the dark. Sir Alfred Mond wished what he eventually achieved: that the two great memorials should exalt the dignity of sacrifice without the tears, the emotion of battle without sentimentality, and the passion of patriotism without its insularity.

CHAPTER XXII

I

NO biographer should progress too far into his story without consulting the doctors who attended upon his subject. A man's medical history is closely knit in with his life and his career. Yet we find in most biographies none but a death-bed scene, to show that the man was subject to the tempers, the weaknesses of character and the phantasies which accompany sickness or chronic disease. There is a book called *Post Mortem*, in which the writer, who was a doctor, sought to elucidate the stories of Henry VIII, Joan of Arc and other personages, in the light of their medical history. Politicians might well be subjected to the same kind of examinations, because, with them, the strain upon character, intellect and physical strength is perhaps more insistent than with the men of any other profession. Perhaps the caricaturists would be less cruel to Lord Snowden if they knew the torture of his physical state: the most hide-bound Tory might be softened when contemplating Mr MacDonald at Geneva, with his eyes failing, because of the strain he has put upon them. In the autumn of his power, Mr Gladstone had signalled a statesman's decline in the bitter words, 'The senses are closing in on me'.

Lord Melchett was a strong man, but there is no doubt that he killed himself with work. Towards the end of his life he said one day, walking on the long

1918 terrace at Melchet, 'I am tired—there is nothing for me to do'. He was then less than sixty. In that realisation began the decay of his physical strength, in the moment when he no longer had any wish that it should sustain him. It is bewildering to examine the papers of the years of the war and see the diversity of Mond's interests and how grimly he did everything that came to his hands. Others, in thousands, worked as valiantly and there is no need to weave an especial crown of laurels for him. But, in examining his early career in Parliament, in watching the slow victory over natural disadvantages, we are inclined to forget that he was also controlling vast industrial enterprises, which later made three-quarters of the nitrate of ammonia and all the British nickel used by the army. When Sir Hedley Le Bas spoke of Mond in 1918,¹ he went so far as to say that he was one of the two greatest business men in Great Britain. The other, he said, was Lord Pirie.

During the months of war preceding the fall of the Asquith Coalition, Mond was devoting part of his attention to his vast industries. Winnington and the other manufactories under his control were given over entirely to war work. His firm had made the first British gas and the filling for gas masks. Mond had given nineteen thousand pounds to equip the Queen Alexandra Hospital. He had given twenty-two thousand pounds to war charities, and he had financed Calthrop's experiment in manufacturing parachutes.

Perhaps these things were forgotten when Mr E. T. Raymond wrote of him as a 'rather flamboyant specimen

¹ Aldwych Club Luncheon, February 12th, 1918.

of a certain class of very rich men',¹ Mr Raymond 1918 added that, at that time, Mond was regarded with 'a certain strained attention'.

The 'strained attention' was more or less general. Mr Raymond tells us that the reason for this attention and the suspicions which went with it, was 'a rather natural jealousy against the concentration of all kinds of power into one pair of hands'.

Sir Alfred Mond would pass unnoticed if he were simply a great landlord seeking a garter or a mere man of wealth after a barony. But he is more than that. He is a very pushful and skilful hand at the political game, working for the most part behind the scenes, and fully alive to the importance of the newspaper as a weapon. He is immensely rich, acute, cynical, and probably knows quite well what he wants; and he occupies a subordinate position (this was written when he was First Commissioner of Works) in a Government which includes poor men, men easily flattered, men exceedingly puzzle-headed and men, by their records, not specially scrupulous.

Is it wonderful that the spectacle is slightly perturbing to many Britons? They would be quite comfortable with a multi-millionaire who was also an obvious ninny. But it is just the combination of great wealth, great ability and apparent humility which makes Mr Lloyd George's bevy of millionaire subordinates so questionable to the ordinary man. And the ordinary man finds especially mysterious the fascination which the Office of Works and the title of the Right Honourable can have for a man of Sir Alfred Mond's quality.

Thus a well-known writer tried to fathom the motives behind Mond's success. The biographer is privileged to make a closer examination than the journalist.

¹ *Everyman*, November 9th, 1918.

1918 The most intimate and locked boxes of Lord Melchett's papers were given to him. A biography without these privileges would have been uninteresting as a task and ineffectual as a record. It is certain from his letters that the social side of Mond's success did not satisfy him. Indeed, there is plenty of amusing evidence to show that it was a strain upon him. Lady Mond, with all the courage and vision so estimable in the wife of a talented man, succeeded in giving him a social background against which he wilted rather pathetically. He was sensible enough to realise that a diamond needs a setting, but he was also too honest to suffer the bother of it. With people whom he knew and liked, Mond was a most genial host. But his manner became morose and shy in a drawing-room. It was usually necessary for a member of the family to follow anxiously at his heels and, with an eager smile and a polite phrase, correct the impression of boredom which he bestowed. This side of him endeared him to his friends, but it baffled his acquaintances.

The accusation of richness also needs explanation. Allowing that he died in a time of depression, Alfred Mond left a fortune which was small compared with the fortune he inherited. He may have loved the power associated with money, but the actual possession of it meant little to him, and, although he made millions of pounds, they poured through his hands. He liked the great pictures, the Greek sculpture and the luxury of a rich man's background, but their value in money would have bored him. He worked hard to make money only because he saw the uses to which it could be put.

The End of the War

II

When the war ended in 1918, the Government was 1918-1919 obliged to break down in a few months an organisation which had taken four years to build. Five million men had to be re-assimilated into English life and the problems were almost more terrible than those of battle. Men who had been trained to die for their country were suddenly obliged to learn to live for it.

Now that the war was over, the Coalition Government no longer had the strong arm of the Defence of the Realm Act to aid it, and it was impossible for Mr Lloyd George to continue to govern the country without testing the feelings of the people in a new election.

Speaking in July of 1917, Sir Alfred Mond said:

I think many men in this House have learned that there is another way of governing the country besides the old way of parties in and out of office, opposing each other, not on principle but on party lines....

He added that after the war, it was perfectly certain that neither the country nor the House of Commons would 'revert to these ancient methods'. Mond thus anticipated the National Government of 1931. But there were to be more than ten years of weak government before this state came about.

The soldiers were coming back into England. The munition factories were closed and the women, who had been emancipated by war wages, were returning to their domestic life, with new ideas of their importance. The war services had demanded and had received the loyalty of the greater mass of people, and by this service they had

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1918-1919 earned the right to raise a louder voice in the government of the country they had saved. So the franchise was extended; constituencies were re-shaped. The entire basis of political government was changed and more democratic foundations were built in its place.

The post-war election came and Alfred Mond went to Swansea again, to ask for the support of the electors. His reception was not whole-hearted. When he walked in the streets, thin-lipped women shouted 'German Jew' at him as he passed by. His opponents went back into the old story of his German origin: somebody discovered that when Ludwig Mond died, he had left some money to the poor children of Cassel. The executive committee of the Swansea Conservative and Unionist Association went so far as to pass a resolution that Sir Alfred 'was not a fit and proper person to represent any British constituency in the Imperial Parliament'. When Mond went to Swansea to defend himself, he broke away from the coldly intellectual strain of his usual speeches. One reads the local newspapers of the time with emotion. It is pathetic to recall Mond fighting this old bogey again, talking of his father, of the torn map of the world which was to be repaired, of his son who had been wounded, and of his own 'torture'. When a man chooses politics as a career, he is obliged to expose himself to slanders, but the methods used to hurt Mond were sordid and savage. His opponent in Swansea, David Davies, owner of the newspaper, made accusations so terrible that Mond was obliged to sue him for libel. The treacherous attacks did not end in Swansea. Through the eagerness of the *New Witness*, an application was made 'to Sir John

Dickinson at Bow Street for a warrant or summons for the arrest of Sir Alfred Mond',¹ on a charge of having transferred shares in the Mond Nickel Company to enemy aliens, without the licence of the Board of Trade, after the beginning of the war. 1918-1919

One set of his enemies accused him of having worked as a German spy during the time he was in office, and this last slander became so loud that Mond was at last obliged to organise three libel actions. The charges were disproved and his honour was completely vindicated. But not until he had stood in the witness-box for almost five hours, torn with emotion, defending himself against ridiculous and painful calumny.

In the midst of this ugly conflict, he fought and won his election. The feeling in Swansea was so wild that even Mond's political enemies, men who admitted that his personality was one that 'had never attracted' them, wrote to the newspapers and begged for more reason and justice. At least two or three compensations came to him, for the libels had proved to him which were his friends. Mr Bonar Law and Lord Birkenhead were endeared to him for ever because of their kindness, and when Mond went to Mr Lloyd George and offered to resign, his leader told him that his faith in him was unshaken. Soldiers and workmen, whom he had helped, wrote affectionate and illiterate letters which were burning denials of the accusations; the soldiers whom he had helped in the hospitals wrote curious letters, un-English in affection. One is afraid of seeming too insistent upon the slanders and disappointments of Mond's life. But it is with a sense of shame that one

¹ *New Witness*, November 8th, 1918.

Alfred Mond

1918-1919 recalls the incidents of this election: not only because of Mond's suffering but because of the exposure of the cruel and dishonest methods by which politics may be conducted.

If one may be permitted a still more personal note in this story, excused because it was of such great solace to Sir Alfred, one would like to recall the picture of him going through the electorate with his eldest daughter, and his son, then wounded and returned from France. Henry Mond had been drawn into his father's friendship with all the passion which is the privilege of Jews. It was a friendship which had begun during the time when his son was in hospital in London, when his father went to see him every evening after his work in Westminster, breaking down the barriers which so easily grow up between two generations. It was a friendship which transcended normal relationships between father and son in later years, and it would be wrong to allow any delicacy of feeling upon the part of the biographer to exclude it from the story. Every fountain of strength in the life of a lonely man like Alfred Mond must be considered if one is to understand him.

III

1917 As an interlude, one might elaborate the story of Mond's service during the war with a memorandum which shows that his attitude towards the enemy was singularly brutal. Among his papers are the notes from which he apparently made a suggestion to the War Cabinet, in June of 1917. He urged that an attempt should be made: to set alight during the dry summer weather the Black Forest at various points. I would point out that the Black Forest is

not far situated from the front, and that as it was possible to 1917
raid Freiburg, it is evidently possible to attack the forest itself.
The Black Forest, which I know intimately, consists of very
large stretches of pine timber; there is practically no under-
growth, but there are large accumulations of pine needles and
cones which are easily inflammable. This is, perhaps, the most
important timber supply for the German army on the western
front. Its total or partial destruction would, therefore, be a
military object of the first importance.

I would submit that this object might be achieved by dropping
large numbers of incendiary bombs at different localities from
aeroplanes, special attention being directed to the methods by
which the tops of the trees can be set on fire.

Our Canadian officers at present engaged in timber cutting
in the French forests, will have a large experience of forest fires
in Canada, and if they were consulted, they could probably
give valuable advice on technical execution of this scheme.

The scheme would be a reprisal of real military value, and
at the same time would destroy valuable assets of Germany,
and, if successful, would create very great impressions in
Germany as well as satisfying public opinion here.

IV

The Coalition Government was returned, with Mr 1919
Lloyd George still leading. The Labour Party had
voluntarily withdrawn from the Coalition and Asquith
and his especial cast of Liberals were in the shadows.
Mr Lloyd George, with his National Liberals, and
Bonar Law, leader of the Tories, combined again to
govern the country.

Mr Lloyd George was a changed man. A British
Prime Minister must belong to Britain and to Britain
alone. It is part of our insularity that we are not pleased
when our heroes achieve international fame. The war

1919 had caused Mr Lloyd George to belong to the world. Perhaps we must be allowed a little more perspective before we can realise how fully he had held the imagination of the people during the war, almost with the passion given to Napoleon. It had been *his* war, as far as imagination and courage in politics were concerned. When the soldiers came home, the fair name of England, the country lanes, the comforts of domesticity were all in some way associated with him. His photograph was hung in the cottages and inns, with 'The Four Generations'. But many people in England did not seem to consider that Mr Lloyd George was equipped to deal with the problems of the State in times of peace. He was imposing when he carried a sword, but they seemed to think he was bewildered when he carried an olive branch. Also, he was a sick man, and an eminent doctor has told us that illness brings out the faults in character, as definitely as any other symptoms of disease. Some of Mr Lloyd George's magnificence seemed to leave him. He chose pliable people for his secretariat. In 1906 his party had rescued England from the tyranny of the landlords. Now the country was passing into a worse tyranny; the tyranny of the inflated business men of the war—'the forty thieves' they were called. They were financiers who had achieved sinister power and riches.

If the Liberals had remained efficient and vigorous, they might have held their own against the Tories. But much of their best industrial blood had gone into the House of Lords and many of their intellectual lights were in opposition with Mr Asquith. In their place were enough slick opportunists to play the Liberals

into the hands of the Tories: especially as the Tories 1919 had new, fine blood to strengthen them. Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, Mr Amery and Sir Samuel Hoare were then the young incorruptibles of Toryism, as yet untainted and untried.

There were to be three years of violent disintegration before the final fall of Mr Lloyd George's Government, and for the greater part of this time, Sir Alfred Mond was Minister of Health. The closing year of his administration as Commissioner of Works showed a slackening of his interest because of the limitations of the office. The exigencies of war had passed, and the refreshing spirit of experiment went with them. Mond had seen the War Museum completed; Sir Edwin Lutyens' noble Cenotaph was in Whitehall, glowing white, above a tide of flowers.

The arrangements for the peace celebrations and the entertainment of Empire Ministers had launched Mond into a wider sea of interests. He had made friends with many of the Dominion Prime Ministers and, when he emerged from these months and found the Office of Works to be no more than a quiet place of routine and tradition, its limitations depressed him. In 1920 he went to Mr Lloyd George and said that he wished to leave politics and return to industry. The Prime Minister offered him, as an inducement, the next big office that came into his hands. Thus it was that Sir Alfred accepted the office of Minister of Health in 1921.

1920 Alfred Mond went to see his mother very often during this year—the last before she died. As she became an old woman, Frida Mond drew about her all the awe, the unquestioning affection and the dignity of a matriarch. Sixteen descendants, and a company of cousins and nephews and nieces had gathered about her. She could remember the brave little journey to the sleepy garden of Winnington, away back in the seventies: she could contemplate the tremendous achievement which had grown out of Ludwig's talents and her own courage.

Fading in her room at 'The Poplars', she clung to every wisp of life, every idea and scheme of her son's, with excitement and lively intelligence. Frida Mond was now seventy-seven, and a great deal of her day was spent upon a sofa. But her eyes and her hands were not tired and she would read magazine after magazine and paper after paper. The more serious reviews, foreign newspapers and journals, were piled beside her. With them were two coloured pencils, a red one and a blue one. With the red pencil she would mark political paragraphs and news of business concerns in far-away countries. These would be cut out for Alfred. With the blue pencil she would mark the paragraphs which told of excavations in Egypt, or scientific discoveries which might interest Robert. And when they came to her, her frail hands would lift a little bundle of cuttings from the table. 'See, I have found these for you.' She watched Alfred and his wife wrestling with their election campaigns. 'Alfred spoke well,' she wrote to her daughter-in-law, 'but you must have distinguished yourself at a

previous occasion as the Chairman praised your elo- 1920
quence and told Alfred to look to his laurels.'

No newspaper escaped her. No new scheme was unfolded to her without she contributed her own, fresh opinions. All troubles, all plans, were brought to her by her great family. Never did she repine or lament. She grew with time. Almost sixty years before, she had sat beside Ludwig at his bench in Cologne, folding his filter papers for him. Now she could contemplate her two sons, both risen to honour, and her granddaughter dancing at the court of the Viceroy in India.

Her room was always full of parcels. She was always wrapping up chocolates and calendars, toys for children and alabaster boxes for her nieces: observing birthdays and festivals in the pages of her diary, never sending a gift without flowers to brighten the drab, brown paper parcel. If the present was a china lamb, it arrived with a string of flowers about its neck.

Sometimes she ventured out for an exhibition—Greek embroideries at the Burlington Fine Arts, or the etchings of some unknown boy whose name had been commended to her. On other days, Arthur Symons would come to lunch and they would talk about books all the afternoon, until it was so late that the curtains would be drawn and tea would be brought in. There were visitors from Rome, with news of a picture or of the excavations. The Goethe Gesellschaft would not pass through London without going to 'The Poplars' to pay a compliment to her.

She would frown over the health of all who came near her. When an ailment was mentioned, a cure would be produced from the forest of bottles in her cabinet.

1920 There was pink French wadding, dipped in Eau-de-Cologne, if one complained of neuritis. There were new tablets from a clever foreign chemist, or drops upon a new lawn handkerchief, if the merest stranger sniffed or coughed.

Her sons' schemes would excite her to new theories. She never touched Alfred's plans without improving them. A little memorandum, scribbled upon the pad beside her bed—a thought, a theory. They were always waiting when he called. And when she was very old, she seemed to give benediction to all the life which was gathered round her. 'Do love each other, it is the quintessence of Christ's teaching', she wrote, in the year of her son's greatest troubles.

CHAPTER XXIII

I

FROM the time he was a student at Cambridge, 1921 Alfred Mond had been inclined to the study of medicine. Most of his friends had been medical students. One of his earliest pleasures had been the grim operation upon a sty in his cousin's eye: an operation which he had pronounced to be 'most interesting'.

The inclination had been fulfilled early in the war when he gave his enthusiasm and his money to Queen Alexandra's Hospital for Officers at Highgate. Mr Herbert J. Paterson had come to him in the autumn of 1914, with his scheme for a hospital for officers. The Medical Authorities of the War Office had turned down his theory that really serious wounds could be cured and limbs that would otherwise have to be amputated could be saved, if they were treated in an Establishment placed at Highgate in the fresh air, away from the germ laden atmosphere of London.

Mond had announced his decision after two minutes thought.

'Right', he said. 'Get on with the plans and I will see the project through.'

'How much will it cost?', he asked.

'Five thousand five hundred to build, and seven hundred pounds a month to maintain', was the answer.

Nine hundred of the worst cases were sent to the hospital: its reputation and record were both noble and happy. Original surgical treatments were evolved and many officers owe the full use of their limbs to the skill

1921 of Mr Paterson, the vision of Mond and the care in convalescence under Lady Mond at Melchet Court.

Towards the end of his life, when he wished to make a memorial to the example of his married life and to the wife who had contributed so greatly to his success, it was in the form of the Violet Melchett Welfare Centre that Lord Melchett expressed his gratitude. Shining among the crowded areas of Chelsea from the day when it was opened by the Queen, the Welfare Centre has maintained a standard of efficiency which exalts it among similar institutions.

These interests show that Lord Melchett's approach to the problems of the Ministry of Health was in no sense purely political.

The first disease which engaged his attention was in the organisation of the office. This delighted him, for, when he was faced with a beaurocratic tradition, he was stirred to thought and action. He was supported by Sir Arthur Robinson, a man who had the rare talent of being able to interpret his Minister and his staff, one to the other. One memorandum exists among his papers to show the way in which Sir Alfred governed his staff.

'Far too many unnecessary minutes are still being written', he announced. '...there is apparently a failure to appreciate the fact that our object in official life is not to get a minute written, pass the paper on to another individual or division and wash our hands of it, but to see that the person who writes to us actually gets his answer in decent time, or that if we cannot give the answer till we have done something with another department or a local authority, he is at all events informed that we are doing it. The Minister trusts that all officers in all divi-

sions, administrative and technical alike, will put their backs 1921
into this business of speeding up our present rate of progress.

'...The public, whose servants we are, can reasonably demand from us far quicker decisions than they now apparently have a prospect of obtaining. The Minister insists on a further speeding up in the rate of progress and wishes it to be quite clearly understood that his judgment of the merits of any officer will depend not only on the quality of his work, which of course is the first consideration, but also on the manner in which and the speed with which he does it.'

From the beginning, Sir Alfred gave the Ministry of Health the character of success and revival. The newspapers seemed to tire of placing him in the pillory and, for a little time, their aloes turned to laurels. The *Evening News* talked of his speeches in the House as 'witty, argumentative and sound'. 'Of all Ministers recently he has done the best', continued the critic. '...there is a persistent vigour about him and a shrewdness of speech which in their way are unique.' On another day 'the House cheered him with amused amazement'. The journalists' compliments fell about him. One said that he 'speaks indistinctly but thinks clearly', and that he was a 'man of great sagacity, with perhaps the best business head in the House'.

Mond opened this new chapter of his life with two or three dramatic successes. His predecessor's housing schemes had shocked the country. Mond reduced the cost of building and rationalised the entire housing of the country. In September of 1920, the houses were costing about one thousand pounds each. Mond liquidated Dr Addison's schemes and brought the cost down to about six hundred pounds. His delight over this was unbounded. He wished to give the people

1921 their own homes, at all costs. 'Give them a stake in the country, tie them to our English system and they will never become Communists', he said.

Many chapters would be needed to delve deeply into the story of Housing in Great Britain. The quality of Sir Alfred's contribution to the history of alternate muddles and triumphs was through his skill as a financier and as an organiser. His aim was to allocate the responsibilities between local authorities and the Government. He laid down that the question of National Health was primarily a question of housing. Bad housing with its attendant evils meant expensive health services and vain attempts to remedy the disease and sickness of the slums. He had advantages over his predecessor which must be mentioned, since Dr Addison was so brutally criticised for his administration of the Housing Schemes. In Dr Addison's time, the Department of Health was young and it was a formless child in the Ministerial family. Dr Addison had been obliged to carry out his housing scheme under war conditions, but without 'war' control of materials. Mond gave the Ministry its first seal of power and responsibility. So much so that, when the war was ended and when Germany was able to contemplate us more peacefully, one of Dr Brüning's first requests was for a report upon Housing in England. The report, drawn up by the Chief Architect of the Department, outlined the progress of Housing from the earliest schemes and spoke of Alfred Mond's advent as 'a voice crying in the wilderness against bad organisation and waste of effort'.

One anomaly which angered Sir Alfred was in the system adopted for handing over the houses to occu-

pants. This was first brought before him during his 1921 term as First Commissioner of Works. He found that in some of the building schemes of the local authorities, no *bona-fide* working men were occupying the houses which had been built for them. Clerks, middle-class tradesmen and civil servants were accepted as tenants and in one instance, a civil servant earning almost one thousand pounds a year was granted a tenancy. Since public money had been used to build the houses, this was a violation of the principles behind the building schemes. It was at this time that Sir Alfred was so disgusted with the methods of local authorities that he proposed to the House that his office should directly design, control and execute 'the housing schemes of the local authorities'. Too much criticism fell about him to make the drastic change possible. But when he became Minister of Health, his powers and his prestige were increased and he was able to force his ideas and control upon many of the recalcitrant local authorities. According to the report prepared for Dr Brüning, when Sir Alfred Mond went to the Ministry of Health from the Office of Works, he 'definitely instituted a policy which refused approval to housing schemes put forward by local authorities', until it was certain that they conformed with certain rules from his own central organisation. Labour, costs and the buying of materials all benefited from this control.

The Geddes Committee of the following year commended the freshness of Mond's point of view over Housing, the economies he introduced and the 'reduction in the administrative expenses for the ensuing year' which amounted 'to thirty-two per cent.' The

Alfred Mond

1922-1923 members of the Committee expressed themselves as 'satisfied that vigorous steps' had been taken 'to reduce expenditure on the staff', and, covering the wide field of their enquiries, Mond was 'practically the only Minister singled out for praise'.¹

Mond's work in the Ministry of Health opened up the short and brilliant period during which it might be said, he was a great Parliamentarian. It was a period which reached its zenith with his attacks upon Mr Snowden in 1923.

Even in this time, he did not tread easily to success and there is a refreshing tang of attack and badinage about some of the debates in which he took part. Colonel Wedgwood was the member whose spleen was most easily drawn, when Mond stood up to speak. In the Bill for the Safeguarding of Industries, which was discussed in May of 1921, Sir Alfred's views were considered to be so violent, and his method of trying to convert the Labour Party to support the Bill so much a part of a 'very unpleasant nightmare',² that Lieutenant Commander Kenworthy declared him to be 'past praying for'. Colonel Wedgwood declared his speech to be 'deliberately dishonest'.³

The Speaker protested on Mond's behalf, but Colonel Wedgwood continued and said that men who had 'hitherto been his best friends' received him now 'with a sense of outrage and contempt with which he has never before met in this House'.⁴

¹ *Cambria Leader*, February 10th, 1922.

² Hansard, May 31st, 1921, column 922.

³ Hansard, May 31st, 1921, column 988.

⁴ Hansard, May 31st, 1921, column 988.

There would be no need to record these 'battles, 1922-1923 if it were not for one typical reply Sir Alfred made to his abusers. He had listened with lowered head when Colonel Wedgwood ended by asking, 'Was it worth it?'

Sir Alfred lifted his head, grunted, and answered, 'I have survived it'. It was a moment and an attitude of mind typical of his approach to the problems of his work as a Minister.

Sir Alfred's work as Minister of Health was not spectacular. It was not a time of important legislation,¹ but he built foundations for the future growth of the Department.

The most constructive work of Mond's term of office, on the purely 'Health' side, was the building of the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Here again was proof of the breadth of his vision. He saw the problems of Public Health belonging, not to the local authorities, nor indeed to the United Kingdom. The work of the School is now a subject of common knowledge. Its achievements are an expression of Alfred Mond's broad principles.

The *Weekly Dispatch* observed Mond's success and wrote of his 'keen financial and business instinct', which guarded him from the pitfalls of his department. His ability not 'to be cajoled by the blandishments of the various public bodies' pleased them. The writer

¹ The interesting year of Lord Melchett's work in the Office of Health was 1921 when measures were placed on the Statute Book covering Housing, Dentist Registration, Public Health (Security of Tenure of Officers), Public Health (Tuberculosis), National Health Insurance (General and Prolongation), Local Authorities (Financial Provisions), and Water Undertakings (Modification of Charges).

1922-1923 went so far as to discuss his talents in relation to the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. When he carried the Dentists' Registration Bill through to victory, new compliments were poured upon him.

The knowledge of medicine had grown, and doctors had learned much that was new during the war. With the accumulation of war experience and knowledge, and the advanced study of public health, Mond was rash and adventurous in his approach to new schemes. He was attracted by the Spahlinger treatment, offering Spahlinger a controlled test of his treatment. In other schemes which have yet to prove themselves, he was sometimes over zealous. But his officials became endeared to him, for, as one of them has said, he was one of those men whom one loves for his faults as much as for his virtues. The most interesting record of Alfred Mond's imagination and energy as Minister of Health is found in the Cabinet papers of the time. But pledges of secrecy surround all Cabinet affairs and one may refer in only the most vague way to the energy with which he bombarded the Cabinet. In the brief period of eighteen months, he prepared and circulated ninety-two different Memoranda, covering almost every field of Government activity. When the Coalition broke up, his wishes for 'a definite housing policy' were still no more than wishes. Yet, from the notes he prepared for the Cabinet, it is obvious that he planned a 'definite housing policy' upon the same basis as the policy which was finally adopted.

A further example of his foresight in laying down a policy which was afterwards adopted by his successors is seen in his attitude towards the Poor Law adminis-

tration, and in particular to 'Poplarism', which has become a sort of generic term for Socialist local extravagance. As early as September 1921, we have him expressing the view that the majority of Boards of Guardians would stand firm against extravagant relief, if they had the support of the Ministry. We then find the conviction growing upon him that certain Boards would ignore the law and the opinions of the Minister. Immediately, he asked the authority of the Cabinet for legislation giving power to the Minister of Health, to intervene and take over the levying of rates, where local authorities defaulted. 1922-1923

Early in 1922 a situation arose at Bedwelty, where the local Board of Guardians refused to accept the Ministry's limitation of the rates of relief. Mond told the Cabinet that 'To meet this situation, it seems to me necessary to obtain statutory authority to enable me to suspend Boards of Guardians and appoint an Administrator vested with the full powers of the Guardians, including the power of charging his expenditure and the cost of administration on the local rates'.

It is typical of the inefficiency of the present system of government that it was not until 1926 that an Act of Parliament was passed giving such power to the Minister of Health. In the meantime, there was an enormous waste of public money which could have been saved if Alfred Mond had had his way in 1922. The practical man of affairs saw immediately what was needed, yet it took everyone else four years to come to the conclusion that he was right.

Sometimes Sir Alfred's vagueness would exasperate his secretaries. One day a deputation was received at

1922-1923 Whitehall. Mond listened to the arguments set before him, seldom looking up at the group of serious men in the room. Suddenly he leapt up, picked up his hat and went out. Somebody had made one statement which excited him and, forgetting everything else, he had taken the phrase with him into the street, to cogitate upon it.

The deputation waited, but he did not return. It was not easy, upon such occasions, for the secretaries to explain the eccentricities of their Minister to a very serious deputation. But humour and affection aided them in passing off such extraordinary situations.

CHAPTER XXIV

I

IN October of 1922, Sir Alfred Mond's political career 1922
tumbled to pieces with the fall of the Coalition. The fall was already threatened when Bonar Law opposed Mr Lloyd George in his attitude towards the proposed war with Turkey. Bonar Law came out of his retirement and declared in the newspapers that we could not act as 'the policemen of the world alone'. Lord Beaverbrook has written an account of what followed in his powerful little book, *Politicians and the Press*. '...a new potential Premier had taken the field... Bonar Law's letter was the death-knell of the Coalition Ministry.' Mr Lloyd George's opposers at last had a leader around whom they could rally. There had been other changes. A new generation of young Conservatives was in the House, and they were not contented with the obscure under-secretaryships which were all they could expect with so many Liberal Ministers in office. One has already realised that Mr Lloyd George's war service had caused him to belong to all the world and not to England alone. This was still more apparent during the peace negotiations. He spent most of his time abroad, trying to tidy up the muddles of war at the many international conferences. Later, when Bonar Law retired, much of the power of administration came into the hands of Sir Austen Chamberlain, who had taken Bonar Law's place as leader of the Tories. A man of scrupulous integrity, who brought honour to the

1922 English name wherever he passed, Sir Austen was loyal to his Prime Minister and to the spirit of the Coalition. However rigid his Tory principles might have been, he never used the Prime Minister's absence as an opportunity to grind his own axe. It has been said that he could have used his position during this time to draw the Conservatives about him and make himself Prime Minister. In commenting upon Sir Austen's loyalty to Mr Lloyd George, Sir Alfred Mond said 'he has sacrificed an opportunity of power and fame, but he has behaved in a way which is no less than an inspiration to anybody who cares about honour in politics'.

When Mr Lloyd George returned to England after the Geneva conference in May of 1922, he met discontent on every side. The country was still groaning from the 1921 strike. The young Tories were restless in Westminster and the newspapers were bitter in their attacks upon him. Mr Lloyd George was brave enough to turn upon Fleet Street. His protests excited them to stronger attacks: in the end they happened upon the Honours scandal. Here was the last poisoned arrow which could be shot from Fleet Street to Downing Street to destroy him.

With the backing of Fleet Street, the Conservatives felt their hand strengthened against the Coalition and they called a meeting of the Tories at the Carlton Club. A resolution of lack of confidence in the Government was passed. The Tory Cabinet Ministers of the Coalition remained loyal to their Prime Minister, with the exception of Mr Baldwin, then President of the Board of Trade.

Soon after the meeting at the Carlton Club, Sir

The fall of the Coalition

Alfred Mond was summoned to a Cabinet Meeting at 1922 Downing Street. The fate of the Coalition was obvious and Mr Lloyd George sensed the end. With the other leaders who won the war, he was already crabbed and inadequate in the eyes of the country and of the younger politicians. The intricacies of government moved towards one of the most interesting moments in the political history of our generation. Mr Lloyd George, as Prime Minister, was nominally supported by an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons. There had been no vote of censure or adverse vote. Why then, could he not ignore the Carlton Club meeting and its judgment, and carry on as before? But he had to realise that here was a definite announcement from a number of colleagues, presumably carrying with them a great block of Conservative votes in the House of Commons.

There were several courses open to the Prime Minister. He could go to the King and ask for an immediate dissolution of Parliament. But, having suffered no defeat in the House of Commons, such a course was hardly justified. Another course was to meet the House of Commons, invite a vote of censure and abide by the result. This was the way advised by his friends. Only a greater perspective than is vouchsafed us at this time will show whether Mr Lloyd George would have kept his power and his prestige had he followed this brave course. The third way (the way he chose, against the advice of many friends) was to place his resignation in the hands of the King, on the ground that his Conservative colleagues, with some exceptions, had left him.

1922 In his memoranda written at the time, Alfred Mond was dominated by his bitter anxiety over the growth of Socialism. Vague with theories and terrible with power, it was spreading its reddish tint over the most discontented parts of England. It had already touched him closely at Poplar. We have said that Alfred Mond had approached all the problems of his life purely intellectually. Neither his politics nor his private life admitted either the sentimental or the divine. But when he was faced by Socialism, he was possessed with a passionate anger which shunned all compromise. He saw in the threatened fall of the Coalition and the cleavage between Tory and Liberal, an opening into which the Socialists would rush, unpractical and fanatical. He went to the Cabinet Meeting at Downing Street with only two motives—loyalty to his leader and hatred of Socialism.

When Mr Lloyd George received his Ministers, he was tired, and his mind was full of the tangled affairs of international conference. The Cabinet Ministers stood about the room in groups. His future, their future, the future of their parties and of the country were discussed with feverish selfishness. It was a time when each man might look anxiously and affectionately at his own axe. Some talked of the future and some of the past; some talked of the country and some of themselves. Mr Lloyd George sat at the table, silent, almost overlooked in the medley of purposes. He had had the power to force conscription upon England. His glorious optimism and confidence had smiled from photographs in a million newspapers—the very expression of confidence upon his face had held the imagination of England, through

its bloody season. This man, who had had the courage 1922
to force the United Command upon the Western Front,
had not now the power to weld a handful of politicians
into agreement. He stretched out his hand, rang a bell,
and asked for a taxi-cab. A few minutes afterwards,
while his ministers were still juggling with anxiety
and hopes, he walked out of the room and drove to
Buckingham Palace. His Sovereign was able to see him
immediately. Mr Lloyd George told the King that he
could no longer govern the country.

II

In November of 1922, the electors sent the Tories to
Westminster. They brought Bonar Law out of his
retirement, a tired and sick man, to be their Prime
Minister. So it was that Alfred Mond had been obliged
to face his constituents again at Swansea. Mr Lloyd
George went down to speak for him on November 11th,
and his tributes to Mond's talents were, of course,
unbounded. Sir Alfred was equally complimentary in
public, although he showed another view in a private
letter. He said it was a 'pity that a man who can be so
fine, spoils so many of his speeches by vulgarisms. He
might leave that to F. E. Smith.... I try to be states-
manlike, but at present everybody on both sides seems to
me to be behaving like wild beasts'. Neither Mr Lloyd
George nor Mond returned to Westminster with even
a remnant of the old Liberal glory. The Tories were
in power, with Mr Baldwin as Chancellor of the
Exchequer. He was to become Prime Minister before
very long, for Bonar Law died before he could

1922-1923 establish the glory of his party. The Socialists, upon whom all Mond's bitterness was concentrated, were the formidable Opposition and the Liberals sat in the shadows, with the ghost of their old prosperity.

Alfred Mond assembled all his powers and, free of the duties of office, he pitted his strength against the Socialists.

In March of 1923, Sir Alfred achieved the greatest success of his parliamentary career with his speech on Socialism: a speech which was accepted as the most damning blow yet dealt to Mr Snowden and his party. It may be interesting to discover these two men in the House, bitterly opposed, both brilliant talkers, both lively thinkers, but along lines which were widely divergent.

Mr Snowden was a cynical speaker. Thin-lipped, and rude, he seemed to be the concentration of all the gall in Socialism. Creeping into the House upon two sticks, his body nervous with physical suffering, there seemed to be something pitiless, something sad about him. Without pity, he excited pity. His friends would demur when he was thus accused and say that, away from politics, a grace and gentleness came into his smile and into his manner. But these qualities seldom appeared in Westminster. It seemed as if his sick body had for so long depressed him that he harboured a grudge against human existence. He lessened the force of his speech with malice and he antagonised just men with the ungenial and grim smile which spread over his face, when some sharp phrase had reduced his adversary to silence.

Alfred Mond might have been such a man, if he had

allowed the disappointments of his life to make him 1923
bitter towards humanity. Mond was a cynical man as
far as life and human nature were concerned. But his
cynicism never turned to hatred and his intolerance of
the stupidity of mankind did not make him intolerant
of the idealism of man himself. Therein lay the difference
between these two men who were to do battle over the
cause of Socialism during the debate of March 20th,
1923.

An article in *The Graphic* of April 25th, 1925, sketches
the two statesmen skilfully. The writer hid his talent
and wit behind anonymity. He referred to Mr Snowden
as 'the most thorough-going individualist who
ever preached collectivism' and then he said:

Some of his greatest Parliamentary battles have been fought
with Sir Alfred Mond. Strange as it may seem, the House of
Commons has only during the last two or three years really
begun to appreciate Sir Alfred at his true value, but now he has
become the great anti-Socialist figure. He does not pretend to
be an orator. He just stands up, beams infectiously through his
glasses, sticks one thumb in the armhole of his waistcoat, holds
a little pocket-book in his other hand, and then proceeds to
'chat' for half an hour, in rather thick tones. But what a 'chat'
it usually is! On economic and industrial questions he is like
a human concentrate of all the reference works that were ever
written, but he does not make the mistake as Mr Sidney Webb
often does—of merely reciting a chapter out of the extraor-
dinary book of knowledge which is his. He likes to make
apparently startling assertions, to goad his opponents into the
incautious interruption of a challenge. And then, like the
falling of a sledge-hammer, comes the production of the de-
vastating fact that has been cuddled up his sleeve in readiness
for the appropriate moment.

1923 Sir Alfred Mond is probably clever enough to know that his appearance and his little peculiarities of speech have a very definite parliamentary value. Other men might say exactly the things he says, but without half of their effect. He has the knack of chopping off the head of a political opponent with such an undisturbed air of smiling benevolence!

Benevolent seems just the word to describe him as he rises—now, unhappily for him, from a back bench below the Opposition gangway. There is not one of the tricks so generally beloved by the maker of speeches. His generously proportioned form, clad in the conventional morning coat and striped cashmere trousers, reminds one irresistibly of the other, lesser commercial men one has seen standing outside a shop-door and appraising the street's supply of customers. His glasses balance themselves with complete safety on the bridge of a nose which offers ample accommodation. A great black moustache flows evenly down either side of a mobile and rather impressive mouth. A carnation, accompanied by its spiked leaves, makes a sprightly show of colour in his button-hole. 'Mr Speaker', he begins, and in a moment the House has settled down to wait for the good things which are sure to come.

He smiles, and smiles, and smiles. Even when, as is sometimes the case, the laugh is turned against him, the smile continues. His utter imperturbability is amazing. Occasionally, a too exuberant Socialist will essay an alleged joke which would have been better left unattempted. The smile still remains, but the recollection of the interruption remains, and presently, just when it suits the convenience of Sir Alfred, there comes the crashing blow, and always the voice maintains the throaty monotone which seems to say that it and passion have never met. It may come as a surprise, but Sir Alfred Mond is one of the most humorous speakers in the House. He has the knack of coining witty phrases, but they come as unconcernedly as if he were merely saying 'Good morning'. That, of course, helps their effect. He is one of the 'Big Brains' of Parliament, and his chief mission is to fight the Socialists.

Sir Alfred reached the supreme height of anger when 1923 Mr Snowden attacked the Capitalist system in the House on March 20th, 1923. Mr Snowden admitted that his motion was 'a direct challenge to the holders and defenders of the capitalist system'. While he admitted that his party did not propose revolution or confiscation, he made no bones about Socialism's wish that the capitalist should be removed from industry. Sir Alfred stood up and delivered a speech so bitter in spirit and convincing in argument that it was adopted as the statement of every politician who feared Socialism. The *Daily Mail* published the long speech *in extenso*, on two consecutive days.

Sir Alfred said that he considered Mr Snowden's 'carefully reasoned and very clever speech' to be a 'formidable indictment, not of the capitalist system, but of civilisation...I might almost say of the Creator of the World'.

'It is extremely easy', continued Sir Alfred, 'to blame the capitalist system for ill-health, insufficiencies of life, feebleness of constitution, inequality of human ability, but will the Hon. Member tell the House that under Socialism there would be no syphilitic children in the world? Will he say that under a Socialist system there would be no drunkards in the world and no offspring of drunkards? Will he tell me that, whatever system you adopt, you can produce that equality of ability, that equality of efficiency, and that equality of physical and mental standards which he presupposes, and for the failure of which he attacks, not the capitalist system, but the industrial system?

'...It was not machinery that developed the capitalist system, A bootmaker in the fifteenth century with one machine or one hammer in his hand was just as much a capitalist—and the Hon. Member knows it very well—as is the owner of a great

1923 factory to-day. The Hon. Member really must not use economic language in this extraordinarily vague way. The Hon. Member really ought to take a course of instruction from the Hon. Member for Seaham (Mr Sidney Webb) next to him. He knows as well as I do that the shovel of an agricultural labourer, the tools of a fitter, the tools of a carpenter are capital, just as much capital in the economic sense—and no economist can deny it or ever has denied it—as the ownership or part ownership of a loom. The man who had a hand loom in the old days was a capitalist. The man who has a steam loom may be a different form of capitalist.

‘In Lancashire and Yorkshire, hundreds and thousands working in those mills are to-day part owners of the steam looms as they were owners of the hand looms. What is the use of trying to confuse the issue by confusing the rich man with the capitalist, when there are millions of people in this country who are capitalists, but who are not rich at all?

‘Every co-operator in your movement is a capitalist, for what is a share or a dividend in your co-operative movement but capital? If you wish to socialise capital you must take the house of every working man who has saved up for it. If you mean that Socialism means robbing the rich, say so. That is a policy, but it is not Socialism.

‘...The Hon. Member for Colne Valley repudiated confiscation. He said: “I would not confiscate. I would compensate”. He will take my shares, but he will pay for them. I do not mind. I would much sooner have State security than the uncertain security and anxiety of industrial work. But I should be extraordinarily sorry for the rest of the community who, for the services of men who understand industry, who have devoted their lives to it, and have an interest in it, are going to be left to a number of civil servants or theorists like the Hon. Member for Stirling (Mr Johnston), who seconded the motion, to manage their business. The Hon. Member for East Rhondda (Lieut.-Col. Watts Morgan), who laughs, knows that as well as I do. He knows very well that he would rather have money in any

Attack on Mr Snowden

business managed by me than in any business managed by a 1923 civil servant in Whitehall.

‘...It is no use indicting the capitalist system. If the Hon. Member could persuade me that he had a system which would abolish these social sores and improve the lot of the people of this country, a system that I could honestly believe would do any good, I would to-morrow be his most earnest recruit, and his most faithful follower. I would admit facts. The fact that a few men in this country who are now rich would be worse off would not weigh with me. It would be a trifle compared with the social welfare of the country.

‘...You may indict the capitalist system, but we are entitled to indict and challenge the remedy you have proposed. You are quite entitled to point out that the world is imperfect. Some people are beautiful and some are not. Some people are clever and some are stupid. As far as I can see, you want to level all your clever people to the level of the stupid. The whole theory of capitalism, as expounded by some Hon. Members, is entirely out of date. It does not exist in our modern industrial system. What exists in our modern industrial system is the captain of industry, the man of enterprise and of brains. He hires labour and he hires capital. He pays for one and he pays for the other. He is the man who creates. It is no good for the Hon. Member to interrupt me. I know much more about this than he does.’

Mr Snowden had been unfortunate in choosing the butt for his attack. He had referred to Messrs Brunner, Mond and Co. as a typical firm against which the Socialists might array themselves. The last accusation which could be brought against Ludwig or Alfred Mond was that of being intolerant capitalists. Indeed, liberal, democratic experiments had been tried and proved at Winnington. The introduction of the eight-hour day and annual holidays for workers were sufficient evidence upon which Sir Alfred could continue his reply to Mr Snowden.

1923 'It is now nearly fifty years', said Sir Alfred, 'since two young men got to know each other in business. With the very little money they had saved, they decided to start a new enterprise. Their capital was very insufficient; their optimism very great. They adopted a process entirely unknown in this country. They asked people who understood the industry to come into it, but they laughed at it. They fought and struggled. They founded that very concern to which the Hon. Member referred, which has given employment and looked after its workmen for something like fifty years, and that was the result of an enterprise which could never have been commenced under any Socialist system that I have ever known.

'Who would have been prepared to take the risk which all the most experienced men in the industry said was an absurd risk to take?

'Those are points that I want the Hon. Member to deal with if he is dealing seriously with this question. This is only one instance. Those two men were my father and the late Sir John Brunner. They did not work eight hours a day, but thirty-six hours on end, without stopping. They created work for themselves; they created works where thousands of people have been employed!

'One of the difficulties which I feel with regard to Socialism is that I do not see how you can make any progress....I have been something like twenty-six years in business, and six years in the Government, and I can tell the Hon. Member that I am convinced from my experience as Minister and business man that it is impossible to carry on the industries of this country from a Government Department. Then how is he going to carry them on? He has not detailed to us any scheme.

'I have heard of schemes of democratic control. That is a beautiful phrase, but the man who has to sell and buy and compete with the markets of the world and meet the keenest competition of American, German and French manufacturers, does not get much guidance if told that, in the future, the industries he is conducting are to be conducted under democratic

control. Presumably there would be a sort of Soviet every 1923
afternoon to decide whether to sell francs, or whether the
exchange is going up or down, or whether we should take
higher or lower prices for our products, or what advertising
schemes we should adopt. These are practical and not theoretical
questions, and we are entitled to have an answer to them when
we are asked to scrap a system which, after all, has brought the
world somewhere, if not to the point which we want.

‘...I am extremely glad the mask is off at last. It is a clean
issue between Individualism and Socialism, a clean issue of
private ownership against national ownership, a clean issue as
to the right of the individual to the reward of his labour and his
enterprise.... We have a clean issue, and I invite all those who
believe in the future order of this country, all those who believe
in the freedom of the people to develop along their own lines
and in their own way, I invite all who do not wish to see us
reduced into a machine-made product, and to a dead level of
mediocrity, I invite all who do not wish to see the future pro-
gress of this country arrested, but who wish to see co-operation
between Labour and Capital, co-operation and partnership
between those who produce and not between people who do
not care and who do not know anything about industry, to
support my Amendment. That is the programme to which I
invite their support. I hope that when the division comes there
will be even some Hon. Members on the Benches above the
gangway on this side of the House who will reconsider their
position. I am speaking in all seriousness. There are friends of
mine on those Benches who are no more Socialists than I am,
who are no more believers in Socialism than I am, and I invite
them to think twice or three times before they commit them-
selves to a policy which is as fatal to the best interests of the
class which they represent as it is to the interests of the com-
munity as a whole.

‘We know the imperfections of the system under which we
work, and we also know its advantages. It is not enough for
him and other Hon. Members to wax eloquent on the sore spots

1923 of our civilisation—a civilisation which has existed in this country now for many hundred years. What they have to prove is that they have something very much better, that they can deliver the goods.

‘You cannot ask an ancient nation, which has grown up on the basis of individual enterprise, of freedom, of capacity for self-development, a nation which is the most individualistic nation in the world—it is more difficult to get our people to co-operate than any others in the world—where every man is proud and glad to strive, whether in the field of business, in the field of politics, or in the field of sport—you cannot ask these people to put their heads under a yoke, to go into a state of slavery—for Socialism to my mind is no better—and lead a dull, monotonous existence in which there is no sparkle and no life. That is what we are being invited to do.

‘Show us, at any rate, what we are going to be given in return for this sacrifice before we surrender our liberties so hardly won to a tyranny no better than any tyranny we have passed through in the past. Show us, at any rate, that happiness will be greater. I say that you cannot do it. I say that it cannot be done, and I invite you to abandon an illusion that is stopping fruitful progress.’

When he was congratulated on his speech, Mond said, ‘No, I made better speeches when I was a young man. But it is not until you have contempt for the House that you can win their respect’.

CHAPTER XXV

I

AS far as the Government of the country was concerned, Mond lived through months of depression in the early part of 1923. When the Tories had come in, under the leadership of Bonar Law, ejecting Sir Austen Chamberlain, Curzon, Birkenhead, and Worthington Evans from office, Mond had groaned and said, 'The office boys have got into the Board-room'. His own Liberal party was so weak that they could offer no alternative to the Tory anaemia. The only alternative was a weak Socialist Government unless, as he dreamed, the Liberals could be spurred to new life and Asquith and Mr Lloyd George could be brought together again.

In November of 1923, Sir Alfred had the satisfaction of bringing the two leaders together, in his office at St Stephen's House in Westminster. Sir John Simon was the fourth leader present. All seemed hopeful then. Old bickerings faded; old enmities were watered down and the hope of new Liberal glory was sealed at a dinner party at Lowndes Square. Mr Lloyd George had nobly accepted the idea of Asquith's leadership: he had sunk any dictatorial ambitions he might have had, for the sake of the party. Mond might have rubbed his hands with joy. As a political match-maker he had done tolerably well, for Mr Lloyd George and Asquith had reached the state of cutting each other in the House and their mutual recriminations had made Mond despair that two such minds could ever enjoy the single thought of Liberalism again.

1923 When the dinner party was over, after the wives of the several Liberal leaders had brought out the fetishes of political friendship, which had been so sadly put away among aloes and vinegar, Mond turned to his wife, in the empty room, and said, 'Well, that's that'.

He might well have gone to bed, proud and hopeful. Indeed, he *was* hopeful. But the dawn dispelled the charm of a good dinner. Slowly, the leaders fell apart again and Mond, seeing his hope of strength in Liberalism fade away, turned to industry for a while and gave his energies to his father's companies. He joined the Board of Brunner, Mond and Co. again and he resumed the Chairmanship of Mond Nickel. But this was not enough. The plans he had woven in the Cabinet might be diverted to industry. The energy he might have used in office was given to Wales and to his own constituency. South Wales possessed the unique anthracite mines which suffered because they were scattered among several small owners, who had no central purpose or organisation. Mond had been approached by some of the leading anthracite colliery owners and a scheme of rationalisation had grown out of their meeting. The result was the Amalgamated Anthracite Collieries, with himself as chairman. Not content with this success, he set about creating new markets for the anthracite. In the autumn he went to Canada and reorganised and extended the market for Welsh coal. At the same time, he helped to bring order to the confused state of the nickel industry. American, Canadian and British interests were at war over the Canadian ore deposits. But it was not until his later visit in 1928 that Sir Alfred placed both anthracite and nickel upon unassailable foundations.

Before leaving England in 1928, he arranged a still bigger merger of the anthracite coal owners, so that his group controlled eighty-five per cent. of the coal in Wales. In Canada, he established the market so securely that the Government later helped him with an embargo on Soviet coal. 1923

Mond's work as a rationalist in industry really culminated in his last visit to America, when he sank the family tradition and interests of Mond Nickel in the great merger with the International Nickel Company of Canada. The great Frood mine had been owned, half by the American company and half by Mond Nickel. Both were spending money on construction and experiment and Sir Alfred saw that a merger would create economies and profits for both of them. His son, who was with him during the negotiations in New York, and who was now co-operating with him in many of his enterprises, has recalled the impatience and the methods of his father's dealings with the Americans. When they came to him at the hotel, with sheaves of documents and bewildering statistics, he would walk across the room, turn to them and say, 'Now, you Americans know nothing. Let me tell you what you ought to do'. And they did. The merger was registered as a Canadian company and Mond came back to England with two new feathers in his cap.

II

After the American visit of 1923, Sir Alfred returned to a depressed England. Bonar Law had died in the harness into which the Tories had forced him and Mr Baldwin was Prime Minister. The yoke was more than he could bear and more than he had anticipated.

1923 In the confidence of election time, Bonar Law and Mr Baldwin had promised the country that they would govern Great Britain without Protection: that, with Free Trade as an oaken plank in their platform, they would rule the country well and present a budget which would surprise the world. Esconced in Westminster, Mr Baldwin had found that England after the war and England before the war were two different kettles of fish. There was a meeting at Plymouth and Mr Baldwin, with Mr Amery at his elbow, had to confess that he could not go on governing the country without Protection. So it was that Alfred Mond came back from Canada, to find the country on the eve of an election and himself obliged to go to Swansea again, to seek re-election. From the speed of these changes we might seek a more quiet picture of Mond in the notebook of his political secretary:¹

Those who did not know him, often regarded the Chief as forbidding. His habit of appearing preoccupied gave the impression of inattention, although, as a matter of fact, he registered everything that he heard or saw in a separate compartment of his mind. I remember very well one instance during his unsuccessful election at Swansea in 1923. For many days I had been apprehensive of the result of the election. I urged him to spend a little time in the Swansea County Club during the lunch hour, where he could meet people. There he could meet Tories and others who were not committed to the Liberal Party. He agreed to lunch there, on the eve of the poll. I arranged for him to sit at the big round table, in the dining-room where I knew that he would be surrounded by the most important people and where he would have the biggest number to talk to. My plans worked out admirably and the lunch was

¹ Mr Dan Thomas, C.B.E.

a success. Sometimes, he had to be managed like a child, for 1923
he disliked any suggestion of stage management. From the
beginning, I was delighted. He talked brilliantly and nobody
left the table.

One of the party ordered liqueurs and invited the Chief to
join them. He accepted and then, as was usual, I intimated
before they broke up that the Chief would like them to have
coffee with him in the Smoke Room. We walked out of the
Dining-Room, and the Chief moved forward, continuing the
discussion. Unfortunately, in crossing the corridor to the
Smoke Room, Lewis Jones, the present Member for Swansea
West, accosted the Chief and asked him if he had seen the
attack upon himself in the leading article in the day's *Morning
Post* and handed him the paper. Sir Alfred Mond walked
into the Smoke Room and stood up against the fire, reading the
article. By this time, his guests were sitting with me in a corner
of the room. I asked them what they wished, and gave the
necessary order. Then I went up to him and asked him what he
wanted. The orders were served. The guests waited. I was
anxious. He still went on reading. I went up to him and told
him that his chair was ready for him. He promptly appre-
ciated the position and sat down, muttering an apology. But,
unfortunately, there was another newspaper on the chair. He
picked this up and became engrossed in it, forgetting every-
body and everything. One by one his guests got up and left the
room, and it was only as the last were leaving that I was able to
prompt him to observe the usual formalities. This is an example
of the sort of thing of which he was sometimes guilty. He
meant no discourtesy, but in view of the importance of the
occasion, one would have thought that he would have been
conscious of his own interests.

III

1923 A new order was awakening in South Wales. The Swansea electors were tired of the old Liberal cause and, entranced by the new, pink tint in the political sky, they embraced Socialism. There were other causes for the change. Swansea had been divided in the redistribution of seats in 1918. Mond had been able to hold the seat in 1918 and 1922, but by now, the Socialists had spun their fair story in all the villages of South Wales. Mond was now third leader of the party, and he was obliged to spend many days during the election campaign in supporting the weaker Liberal candidates in other places. While he travelled about the country, his own constituency weakened in the hands of a new agent. He returned to Swansea for the last few days before the election, but he was too late to retrieve himself. He was beaten in the election by about one hundred votes. The one compensation in his fall was that his son was elected for the Liberal seat of the Isle of Ely by four hundred votes, overturning a Tory majority of six thousand.

The Conservatives came back two hundred and sixty-five strong. The Socialist strength was swelled to one hundred and ninety-five. The Liberals were one hundred and sixty-five in number and the power of Government lay in the hands of the party to which they attached themselves. Divested of office, Mond sailed away from the country and for two months he squandered his time and energies in an Indian summer. His friend, Lord Reading, was Viceroy now, and, with the dignity of an older, finer Liberalism upon them, these



MR. LLOYD GEORGE, SIR ALFRED MOND,
AND MR. ASQUITH.

two men could view the pandemonium of Westminster 1923 from afar and honestly regret the passing of a great generation. Their careers ran along similar lines; from quiet Jewish family life to Liberalism, from Liberalism into the House of Lords and, then, serving upon the same Board of Directors. But they were vastly different men and it is interesting to compare them. Intellectually Lord Reading knew men's hearts to the core. With him charm seemed to be part of a carefully planned policy. His voice was never raised in anger. It was soft with benevolence and accumulated wisdom. But if you lifted your head and looked from the lips to the eyes, you found a coldness which was surprising.

When he sat upon the Viceregal throne, he was kingly. He moved slowly, with the dignity of inherited breeding. Ten generations of peers might have moulded the suave dignity with which he turned to speak to the people.

It was into this world that Lord Melchett went, incongruous, blundering with all the honesty which burned within him, too mighty in his energies to curb them to the prescribed forms of a sophisticated society. This had been his failing all along. He had none of the pretty facets of polish which might attract affection; none of the social tricks which might commend him to the ranks of society.

Some people say that he was jealous of Lord Reading's achievement. But Lord Melchett did not know what jealousy meant; it never entered into his constitution. The picture of Lord Reading upon the throne might have tantalised one side of him. They were both Jews, but they had chosen vastly different

Alfred Mond

1923 goals. Indeed, it might be said that Melchett did not choose his. The spirit in him forced him to go on, unchoosing, blundering sometimes, but inevitably going on relentlessly, pursuing his destiny.

Sir Alfred returned to England refreshed. A few days after his arrival, he wrote to Lord Reading:¹

Since my return, I have seen both Asquith and Lloyd George and had some talk with them, as you asked me to, on the position in India.... There was a debate in the House of Commons one evening, on the motion of Viscount Curzon. I managed to get a ticket, and for the first time for seventeen years I listened to the debate from the Strangers' Gallery. It seemed very curious and strange. The debate was very bad....

When Lord Reading had been appointed Viceroy of India, Mond had said, 'It means the end of Lloyd George. Directly Reading's calming influence is withdrawn from him, his power will decline'. In the letter of 1924, Sir Alfred wrote to Lord Reading:

...Your cool and detached counsel would be of invaluable service in the very difficult position the Party is now in.... Lloyd George has just started a new hare with his coal and power ideas, and may be able thereby to rivet attention once more upon himself.... Every Party is more or less dissatisfied with the leaders and itself....

IV

1924 From this detached view of the situation Sir Alfred went into another election. Sir Ellis Griffiths resigned from the Carmarthen seat, and Mond came back to Westminster, representing an agricultural seat for the first time. The electors and the press were rude to him: they would not believe that a cosmopolitan

¹ April 24th, 1924.

figure like Sir Alfred could be versed in the farmer's 1924 problems. Six years afterwards, Lord Beaverbrook wrote to him, 'There is no use talking about farming to a person who does not understand it....I once listened to you. I did not make any interruption for half an hour or more. You are one of the few persons, reared in the lap of luxury, who is really capable of understanding the farming problems'.

During the election, Mond barely paused to consider the questions of agriculture. He poured the vitriol of an angry man upon the Socialist Government. By this time his son was married and Sir Alfred had been delighted by the birth of his first grandson. Also, a period of misunderstanding with his son had changed into a strong and deep friendship. Together, they fought the Carmarthen election, violent in their declarations against Mr Ramsay MacDonald and his faded red administration. Mond was not inclined to compromise. Although the Liberals were supporting the Socialists in power, he said he would return to Westminster only to expel the Socialists. 'Rather any Government which would maintain the stability of the State and the cleanliness of public life than the Government which we now have,' he said.

V

When he sat in the House again, Mond had food for his fight against the Government in the injustice of the Campbell case: a passage in politics which suggested that the Socialists were not clever enough to be even skilfully dishonest. Campbell was to be prosecuted for publishing poisonous communist literature. Under a

1924 Tory or Liberal Government, a man guilty of such a crime would have gone hurtling to Wormwood Scrubs, without any legal dilly dallying. The way for such men was clearly defined by the law. At first, the Attorney-General¹ said that there should be a prosecution. Then he said that there was not enough evidence to bring a conviction.

There was a debate in the Commons, for the Tories believed that the process of the law had been tampered with for political purposes. Mr MacDonald and the Attorney-General attempted a defence of their party and their cause, but this did not convince the Tories. They put down a vote of censure on the Government.

Mond returned to the House in the midst of this turmoil. He said, 'It is a disgraceful state and a justification of the most violent charges ever brought against the Socialists. One cannot help a time of stupidity in Government, but, by Heaven, we can protect ourselves against a time of flagrant dishonesty. It is our one chance to beat them now and this we must do'. Speaking of Mr MacDonald's defence in the House, Mond said, 'Never have I seen a man placed in the painful position before of practically admitting that he made a false statement to his fellow members in the House of Commons'. When Sir Alfred made this statement at Ilford, somebody shouted, 'Liar'. But the distress of loyal Socialists scattered throughout the country was not enough to wipe Mr MacDonald's political slate.

To criticise Mr MacDonald's character upon the incident of the Campbell case would be unjust. In those days, he was a man who felt more than he thought

¹ Sir Patrick Hastings.

and his actions were open to the influences of this 1924 dangerous condition.

Alfred Mond had returned to the House with a refreshed point of view. The holiday in India and the change of electorate had stimulated him. He found himself among leaders who were fogged by the novel parliamentary situation and by the prospect of a third general election, within two years. The usual political oracles and party managers, agents and whips were being consulted and they offered a whirl of new, contradictory solutions. Neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives could decide whether this was the moment in which to destroy the Socialist Government. His blunt courage helped Mond in such a time of indecision. He said, 'Political advisers are always wrong. In this alone they are consistent'. He went through the House, from leader to leader, and among the private members in the Smoking Room, accepting congratulations upon his return, and using the friendly moment to send home his barbs about the Socialists. He talked to Mr Baldwin, to Mr Lloyd George and to Asquith. There came the evil day upon which the Vote on the Motion of Censure was to be taken. It was to come at eleven o'clock, and at ten, an hour previous, the leaders were still undecided as to how they should act. Mond and a small band of zealots redoubled their efforts and sharpened their barbs for the final thrusts. At half past ten o'clock, Asquith stood up, to make his last speech in the House of Commons. The coming election was to reject him and hand him on to the House of Lords. When he stood up, he represented the voice of England. He walked to the despatch box, before which he had always

1924 stood to speak to the House. The box was marked by the thumping of Gladstone's ring. It might have been the Victorian himself, who bestowed his wit and his brilliance upon the occasion. Asquith began:

I do not rise for the purpose of entering into the merits of the controversy, which has been carried on during this debate, nor shall I do more than drop a sympathetic and tributary tear on the funeral oration which the Prime Minister has just pronounced. These obsequial tributes are generally reserved, if not until the corpse has been interred, at any rate until the doctor has pronounced that life is extinct.

In the end, he offered the Socialist Government the alternatives of defeat or a Parliamentary Enquiry 'at once', upon the lines of the enquiry into the Marconi Scandal, which he had himself accepted when he was Prime Minister. Mr MacDonald chose defeat. Mond said,¹ 'Mr Ramsay MacDonald wanted to be defeated. Mr Thomas and Mr Snowden objected entirely to what Mr MacDonald was doing, and they would have agreed to an enquiry....I want to know why Mr Henderson, the Home Secretary, in whose Department this whole question started, has never spoken at all. I want to know why we have never been told that Mr Lansbury and other Labour members went to see Mr Henderson on this prosecution, and Mr Henderson took them across to 10, Downing Street, to see the Prime Minister'.

He said, 'Like all Socialists, directly they get a little power, they will develop consciences. They haven't so far, but they will. Then they will become Liberals in their point of view. Then they will develop a sense of honour and become Tories and that is the end of them.'

¹ At Ilford, October 14th, 1924.

For Goodness sake get them out now and let us get on with the business of governing the country'. 1924

Apparently, the country agreed with him....England had always been like a mother, with her child of Socialism. She had always been willing to allow it to play freely on the pavement of politics. But directly she saw it running out into the road, among the real traffic of affairs, she had always caught it by the seat of its pants and brought it back to heel. This happened after the Campbell case in 1924. The experiment with Mr MacDonald cost the country the expense and trouble of another election and, having tasted Mr MacDonald's wares, Britain sent the Tories back to Westminster with the biggest majority in history.

The fat and complacent figure of John Bull, for the moment incarnated in Mr Baldwin, bestowed honesty and dullness upon our affairs. The Socialists were soundly smacked and the Liberal party was destroyed for ever. With them went Asquith, rejected by his constituents, elevated to the dignified place assured him in the Second Chamber. The last speech he had made as a funeral oration over the Socialists, before the election, was also his own funeral oration. It was a picturesque end to an interesting career: the career of a man whom Mond spoke of as 'one barred from true greatness by indecision and the lack of any sense of adventure'.

CHAPTER XXVI

I

1925 **I**N 1925, the Liberal house was still in sad disorder from the results of the 1924 elections. In 1923, there had been one hundred and fifty-three Liberals in the Commons. Now there were only about fifty members in the House. Mr Lloyd George and his supporters had lost the fidelity and support of the middle classes, the Nonconformists and the Trade Unions, who had enthroned them so valiantly in 1906.

The decline of Mr Lloyd George's personal influence had begun some years before. It led to a fall which throws at least as much discredit upon the fickleness of the British public as upon Mr Lloyd George himself. He had been the one man with the passion of leadership and the ruthless courage to hold the imagination of the British people during the war. He belonged to war. He was melodramatic. He was steeped in poetry and fine phrases and he never sheathed his sword while there was business to be done. He was magnificent in war.

The memory of the public is short and the astuteness of Mr Lloyd George's political opponents had been sharp enough to use the public memory to suit their own ends. History knows no gratitude. Mr Lloyd George was made into a figure of fun: *Punch* published its bitter and sad cartoon, 'And he was once Prime Minister'.

People learned to say that he was a trickster. They forgot that this ability to make truth serve his own

purposes was part of the genius which made him a leader in the war. If he had told the public the truth during the war, we might now have a Hohenzollern at Windsor. Politicians talk of truth more frequently and tell the truth less frequently than the men of any other profession. They know full well that they may stand upon their platforms, like lions with false teeth, and tell their idolising supporters that they are going to take the white flame of truth into the holy aisles of Westminster.

But they know also that this naïve conception of honesty, such as one impresses upon a child, caught while stealing jam, can be humbug in a time of crisis. If the country had been governed upon truth during the war, we might now be crying to Germany for relief from reparations.

When peace came, Mr Lloyd George was ill-advised. He wished to be released, but was spurred to go on. Nor was it in his character to retire from the fight. He still stood in the battlefield, long after peace had been signed. If he had retired with the glory of the battle upon him he would speak to his people with the voice of safety and benevolence.

Just as the great soldiers of the war were soon forgotten, so our national ingratitude forced the great man into the shadows. It was not until he was dangerously ill, in 1931, that one was suddenly reminded of the stupendous story of 1916-18. Thirteen years afterwards, Mr Winston Churchill wrote: '...History will return her pages back to Chatham to find his parallel in achievement. No one has consciously shaped the details and routine of British daily life as he has

1925 done....He led the supreme manifestations of the might of Britain to absolute and overwhelming victory.¹ Mr Lloyd George had failed as a peacemaker, and Great Britain, eager to shake off the memory of the war, was equally eager to forget his achievement. Nor could Mr Lloyd George work with the smaller men of the first years of peace. The big men of the Coalition, Lord Curzon, Lord Birkenhead, Lord Reading, Mr Churchill, Lord Melchett, Bonar Law, Sir Austen Chamberlain and General Smuts had been dispersed to other countries and other parties. Mr Lloyd George could do no more than struggle on, trying to wear this new, white cloak of peace. Sometimes he went up to his cupboard and took out the suit of armour. It had shone so well in the years of war. He would put it on again and again. As recently as March of 1932, he came forth from Churt, fighting, brave, astute, bitter and shrewd: such excellent attributes in soldiering but calculated to awaken nothing but suspicion among the phlegmatic English, in times of peace.

II

When he saw his depleted ranks in 1925, Mr Lloyd George was obliged to assume the rôle of magician. He must produce a new and wonderful white rabbit from his hat: a rabbit so white and so wonderful that it would delight the eyes of the country voters and make up for the loss of the Trade Union and Nonconformist confidence. The white rabbit was to have the name of the Land Policy. Without the vote of the counties no party could achieve real power in England. In the view

¹ *Daily Mail*, August 12, 1931.

of Alfred Mond, the magician surpassed himself. He 1925
produced what Mond saw as a white elephant and,
astride upon its back, he led the Liberal party to further
defeat. On the way, he performed one last conjuring
trick. He put the Green Book into his hat and pro-
duced it as a White Paper. In this new rôle, he lost still
more friends, the chief among them being Alfred Mond.

Even among themselves, the Liberals could not
agree upon the form of the new policy. Mr Lloyd
George had begun his scheme by calling a committee
of 'experts' together. Then the members of his party
took the drafts of the scheme back to their own corners
and there they enlarged, enhanced and changed the
proposals.

The Liberals bent over their foolscap paper and
forgot that a Land Policy must be translated into action;
that in farming, the spade was mightier than the pencil.
The result of these deliberations was written in the
Green Book: Mr Lloyd George's Magna Charta for the
agriculturists of Britain.

About this time, Alfred Mond visited Mr Lloyd
George at Churt and came back to Melchet, his own
farm, with a copy of the new and wonderful document.
It horrified him. His son had represented an agricultural
constituency, and Sir Alfred himself had knowledge
of farming, and he was member for an agricultural
district. Together, father and son went through the
document and prepared notes in answer to Mr Lloyd
George's proposals. Alfred Mond looked up from
the Green Book and said, 'It is no more than a
blundering attempt at bureaucratic socialism'. Mr
Lloyd George has since said that Mond merely used the

1925 Land Policy as an excuse for leaving the Liberals, so it might be as well to quote from two early letters to show that Mond despaired of his chief's plans, long before there was any suggestion of separation. Indeed, the suggestion of their parting company came from Mr Lloyd George himself. Mond had written to Mr Lloyd George in September of 1924:

As regards the land question, we must have a talk about this. I do not think I quite agree.

Mr Lloyd George answered:

I very much regret that you cannot see your way to accepting the proposals which I put forward....If we find that it is impossible to secure co-operation, then each of us will have to take his own course.

The essence of Mr Lloyd George's Land Scheme was that 'Agricultural labourers must be secure of a living wage and of full opportunities of access to land for their own use'.

The ideal was noble but not entirely new. Mr Lloyd George proposed to achieve this agricultural heaven through a form of State ownership. The opening sentence of his policy provided that 'On and from an appointed date, the State shall be deemed to have resumed possession of all land in the United Kingdom, which at that date is used for or capable of use for the production of foodstuffs, timber or other natural products'. To Mond, it was a proposal more revolutionary and sinister than Mr Snowden's attempt upon the powers of capital in 1923. The farmers were to rise from the humble limitations of their present life and they were to farm their own land. Their landlord was to be the State. Mond saw that every machine they wished to buy,

every improvement, every experiment and every change 1925
in their husbandry would be referred to the vague
authority of officialism. Here was a serfdom, he said,
more terrible than any put upon them by private
tyrants. Mr Lloyd George imagined thousands upon
thousands of small farmers, holding their land upon
this flimsy tenure. If they did not farm their land as
officialism wished; if they did not satisfy the visiting
official that this acre or that meadow was producing
maximum results (defined by an official at Westminster),
then the farmer was to be turned off his land and
another was to be put in his place.

The policing of this great scheme called for brilliant
men. 'They would have to be the best farmers in
England', said Mond. So it meant that only the second
best farmers would till the earth. The best would wear
a uniform and farm in offices and upon reports and
theories.

Every landholder was to be watched by the State.
The merest grower of cabbages upon a pocket hand-
kerchief of loam was not to be excused. Every time the
official rode up the path, the frost-bitten potato, the
bird-pecked apple, the cow with the ulcer, must be
hidden in the garret. This theorist, this farmer with a
pen in his hand, was to have the power to oust the
farmers from their house and their acres.

Nor was this all. In a later draft it was provided that
the State was to be a permanent competitor for all land
coming into the market. Indeed, the State would be
obliged to buy all the land it could find, but in open
competition. Mond feared the effect upon prices and said
that it would lead to the greatest land sale ramp in history.

1925 The proposals were drawn up with a disregard for the eccentricity of human nature. Thus it was that Alfred Mond viewed the great scheme which was to be the policy of his party, of which he had become one of the three leaders. He saw in the Green Book the destruction of individual effort in farming. Mond was still a Liberal. He was in favour of social co-operation and the power of the State to act, but he had a different view of the farming future of England.

He said that he realised that 'the present system of landlord and tenant has in many cases broken down' but he was not prepared 'to accept Universal Land Nationalisation as the true remedy'.¹ It seemed to him incredible that Mr Lloyd George could urge State ownership upon England, with the available examples of Denmark, Belgium and Prussia and the British Dominions to prove the merits of freehold tenure.

So Mond evolved a new Land Policy opposed to that of his leader, for what he described as 'the free man on the free land'. Its essence was poured into a document which he wrote and distributed among his colleagues. His proposals were based upon the fear of the socialistic dangers which Mond saw lurking in Mr Lloyd George's plan. He wrote in his memorandum:

You do not cure the vice inherent in dual ownership, which, to my mind, is the curse of English agriculture, by substituting for the landlord and his agent a county authority and some other agent. The only real cure is to enable the cultivator of the soil to be the master of his own destiny, and to leave it to him to make a success or a failure of his venture, and to trust to the

¹ In a letter to Alderman John Lloyd, chairman of the Carmarthen Divisional Liberal Association, February 2nd, 1926.

Mond and the Land Policy

working of general economic laws, that, in the long run, the efficient will displace the inefficient.... 1925

It is a very striking fact that the chief grievance expressed by the ex-soldiers settled on the land since the war is, that at no time is the land they till allowed to become their freehold property, and that they are merely creating improved values for the County Council. The fundamental desire of a human being to own some land which he can call his own, and do what he likes with, is evidently greater than the assumed 'deep-lying sentiment that the land ultimately belongs to the people'. This may be a philosophical dictum, but I have never found that it is really a sentiment held even by those who express it. Even the most 'red' collier in South Wales saves money to buy a little farm when he grows old, or to build himself a house, and he would be horrified at the suggestion that there should be any interference with his absolute ownership and right of sale and disposition. I maintain that the whole history of the world has shown that the owner of a freehold is the man who puts most energy, labour and money into his property.

...When a man's own interest is not sufficient inducement to him to cultivate his land properly, no county inspectors are going to prove more successful. The whole idea of treating the agricultural community like naughty children, ignorant of their own business, is fundamentally false. There is, undoubtedly, room for great improvement in agricultural methods. My own experience for some years past has shown me, however, that practically uneducated farmers, or even labourers, are often better guides to the successful cultivation of a farm than theoretical experts from outside.

III

In another memorandum found among his papers, Alfred Mond dealt with the general economic considerations in Mr Lloyd George's plan.

1925 The purpose set out in the rural scheme put forward by the Land and Nations League,¹ *to use all land in the country suitable for agriculture so as to obtain a maximum production of food and to occupy a maximum population under the best possible conditions of life*, and the consequent scheme for endeavouring to carry this purpose out, while estimable in its object, is subject to the gravest consequences of economic contradiction.

It must be realised from the outset that the arable value of English land has been considerably depreciated by the fact that the Dominions, the Argentine and the United States have brought under cultivation within the last half century, enormous areas of virgin land with a low yield and cheap costs. It must also be realised that this condition is temporary. Two unrelenting factors are in operation which will, in due course, bring this condition of affairs to an end. These factors are, firstly, the increasing annual exhaustion of the virgin soils, and, secondly, the annual increase in the world's population. When these two economic factors have pursued their operation to a full extent, the arable value of English land will reassert itself.

In the meanwhile, any attempt fundamentally to alter the economic condition of arable land in England and to alter substantially the balance between the rural and urban populations of the country, unless it is supported by the heavy State subsidies which means eventually agricultural protection and Corn Laws, is bound to result in disaster, in the crowding on the land of a body of people larger than the land is able to support, and therefore in an impoverished and depressed agricultural population.

IV

Sir Alfred Mond made no bones about his attitude. It led to his break with the Liberal Party and to the end of his friendship with Mr Lloyd George. It led, also,

¹ The body formed by Mr Lloyd George in order to convert the Liberal county organisations to the Green Book.



“THE DILUVIANS”

From the Cartoon in *Punch* by Bernard Partridge.

Lloyd George: “Give you a tow to Ararat?”

Alfred Mond: “Thank you, I’m all for getting back to the land,
but I rather mistrust your craft.”

to a deluge of calumny which he brought upon himself 1925
by his revolt against the Land Policy. So it is important
that the documents and letters of the time should be
examined carefully to observe the honesty of Mond's
attitude.

Here was the fulcrum upon which Mr Lloyd George
and himself were balanced, opposed and opposite.
Sir Alfred immediately realised his duty to his con-
stituency and he wrote to the chairman of his division.
He said that Mr Lloyd George's proposals formed
'a fundamental division of view, on which people must
take their stand. Are you a Socialist, or are you not?
Do you want the land nationalised and run by a horde
of officials, or do you not?' 'To me', added Sir Alfred,
'the answer to all these questions is in the negative,
without doubt or hesitation.'

Neither the press nor the public was at first satisfied
with the motive behind Sir Alfred's declaration. He
was a politician and he was a clever and ambitious man.
Where was the *true* motive behind this revolt against
his leader? It was quite clear to them that he was en-
gaged in a terrible conflict with Mr Lloyd George, a
personal conflict in which Mond was aspiring to fill the
leader's position himself.

Mond was obliged to meet his Liberal friends in
Carmarthen and tell them that 'nothing can be further
from the truth'. Speaking at Carmarthen on January 6th,
Mond said:

...I will tell you frankly here and now, that nothing in the
world will ever get me to subscribe to assist the idea or the
proposal, that the State should, on a given day, take over all the
agricultural land in England and hand it over to the local

1925 authorities....That is so fundamentally opposed to my own views that I should fight it to the bitter end....I should fight regardless of the views or opinions of anyone else....Liberalism means nothing to me if it does not mean freedom.

V

Mr Lloyd George called a meeting of the Liberal Candidates' Association to place his plan before them. The history of the Liberal Candidates' Association might be told here, so that the value and importance of Mr Lloyd George's next step might be appreciated. For there were many steps between the Green Book in his hand and the farms of the country.

We recall that when the Liberal Party came back to the House after the 1924 elections, their strength had fallen to about fifty members. This meant that the enormous number of Liberals, prospective members and past members had no voice. The fifty chosen members could commit the Liberal cause in any way they chose. They could commit the whole party on major questions of policy in the House of Commons. This state made the unsuccessful Liberals very anxious.

At that time, the leader of the party in the House of Lords was Lord Beauchamp. Lord Beauchamp gave his usual party reception at Halkin House, at the time when the mass of Liberals were so anxious in contemplating the fifty members who represented them in the House.

Among the guests was Mr W. H. Pringle, a zealous politician who saw the danger of the small representation in the House in its darkest form. While Lord Beauchamp's party was at its height, Mr Pringle

improved the shining hour and canvassed the defeated 1925
Liberals who were present. He induced them to attend
a meeting at the National Liberal Club next day. They
must form themselves into some sort of organisation
which could watch the actions of the fifty elected
members and preserve the Liberal cause from any
hasty or ill-judged commitments they might make
and which they would be obliged to defend in their
constituencies.

The meeting was held and more than a hundred
candidates assembled to hear Pringle speak. But they
sat safely below the platform. There was a touch of
conspiracy about all this. No one joined Pringle on the
platform to support him in his brave action. He stood
alone behind the green baize cloth and pleaded with
them to guard themselves against the Members of
Parliament.

Pringle had much to lose. He was a professional
politician and he risked his livelihood in thus conspiring
against the Liberals in power. If his hundred colleagues
went out of the room unconvinced and left him alone
with his cause, behind the green baize table, he would
have been ruined. The half-hearted Liberals rallied
around him and they were thrilled. He was always
eloquent, but this time conviction and his own des-
perate situation made him speak as he had never spoken
before. He spoke in the phrase of classic Liberalism
and, with the sweat shining upon his face, he closed
his appeal with Blake's lines:

Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

1925 The Liberal Association was formed there and then. It was to this body, then almost a year old, that Mr Lloyd George brought his Green Book for approval. The assent of the members was necessary before it could make its next step towards realisation; the approval of the National Liberal Federation.

By this time, Alfred Mond had declared himself finally and passionately. 'I remain a convinced and sincere individualist....In Socialism I see to-day, as I always have seen, the degradation of the individual, the deterioration of the community and the downfall of the State.'

To Mond, the Green Book¹ was the primer of Socialism on the land. In this state of mind he received the announcement of Mr Lloyd George's meeting with the Liberal Association. The proceedings filled two days, and on the second day Mond went to the National Liberal Club and addressed a noisy gathering of candidates and members.

His position was full of hazards. He was the friend of Mr Lloyd George. Through the war years and ever since the election of 1906, they had pursued the same course with few deviations. The admiration he expressed for Mr Lloyd George's talents was unbounded. Also, he was a declared Liberal. Yet this Green Book, which was held up as the hope of Liberalism, was

¹ Mr Lloyd George's Land Policy was afterwards changed and its terms were modified so that they were a little nearer to Sir Alfred Mond's ideas. In this new form, the Green Book became the White Paper, and as such, there was a reservation that if it were rejected by the Federation, Mr Lloyd George would be free to go back and to advocate a full policy as outlined in the original Green Book.

anathema to him. It stood for everything he despised. 1925
In declaring his belief that England's agricultural future would be damned by the new policy, he sacrificed all hope of future greatness as a Liberal leader and he risked losing all his chances of political eminence in any party whatever. The public does not like politicians who change their politics. Better the reliability of stagnation than the risks of progress and development.

It was with this conflict of possible results that he went to face the Liberals to denounce Mr Lloyd George's policy. Mr Lloyd George had already spoken and his picture of the Promised Land had dazzled the eyes of the Liberals. There were some independent insurgents among them, although they had not yet declared themselves. It was impossible to know their number. Nor had they any leader who could whip them together for the final vote. When Mond finished his speech, he walked out of the National Liberal Club and left a few ardent supporters to make a sporadic, last effort to gather the opposition together for the vote at five o'clock.

There were still a few more speakers. Mr Lloyd George sat in his private room and reports of the progress of the meeting were brought to him from time to time. When it was known that the opposition was at work, the speeches of his supporters became shorter. The voting was hastened and when the opposition appeared at five o'clock, they found that the vote had been taken an hour earlier, as the speeches had come to an end. Mr Lloyd George's Green Book was one step nearer to being the Liberal law, but Alfred Mond had fallen out of the procession of crusaders, by the way.

1925 He was suddenly alone, no longer able to fight with the zeal of his days in Chester, unwilling to follow Mr Lloyd George with slavish acceptance of his will.

 In looking about him, he saw the two leaders of British politics, Mr Lloyd George, brilliant, with too much Celtic courage and imagination to hold the trust of the stolid Anglo-Saxons, and Mr Baldwin, who so often confused his responsibilities with those of the Archbishop of Canterbury. 'I am not as simple as I seem,' Mr Baldwin had once protested to Mond. But Mond said that he was quite certain that Mr Baldwin would never convince the British public that this was true.

CHAPTER XXVII

I

NO aspect of national character excites so much 1926
humbug as loyalty. Ghastly tyrannies have
existed since the beginning of civilisation, under the
guise of loyalty to parents, loyalty to promises and
loyalty to the State. A great man knows only one
loyalty and that is to his own sense of what is true.

One may examine the piles of papers which Lord
Melchett left behind him and discover mistakes he
made, judgments which faltered away from his usual
standard; one can also discover that perhaps, in industry,
he came to have too much confidence in his own in-
stincts. But the shining conviction which one receives
from a long and careful examination of his letters, is
that he was a man loyal to his sense of truth. In the
declaration of war between himself and the Liberal
Party, he had to choose between two loyalties; the
one to a party with which he believed that he no
longer had anything in common; the other, loyalty
to his own sense of what he believed to be true.

The story of his going over to the Conservative
Party begins with his own letter sent, to Lord Oxford
and Asquith, on January 23rd.

My dear Lord Oxford and Asquith,

The position of the Liberal Party has been steadily drifting
from bad to worse. The unity which we have striven for, and
which I did my best to promote, has in fact never been achieved

1926 and all efforts to revivify and reorganise the Liberal forces have been rendered hopeless by the introduction by Mr Lloyd George of a Land Policy which has produced a new, profound cleavage and embarrassment in the Liberal ranks. I had hoped that when the compromise with the Liberal and Radical Candidates' Association had been reached, we had at any rate attained some measure of agreement, even if I felt that I must insist upon altering the proposals in the direction of the extension of freehold ownership. The resolution which the National Liberal Federation Executive is submitting to the Land Convention is so framed that it revives the original policy of the nationalisation of agricultural land as first advocated in the Land Report. To this policy in any shape or form I am absolutely and unalterably opposed, and the fact that it is being put forward by the chief Liberal organisation, apparently with your consent, proves to me how divergent my views are on this fundamental question of principle from those of a large and influential section of the party. It has become absolutely clear to me that this is a fundamental issue of principle and not of detail, which no attempted compromise can overcome or disguise. I have, however, no desire to be a source of fresh difficulties or divisions in the Party or to be engaged in controversy within its ranks. I have therefore, after the most careful consideration, decided that the only course for me to take is to sever my lifelong connection with the Liberal Party and, if I am to be able to render any further political service to the country, join the party with whom I feel I can most usefully co-operate, the Conservative Party. That such a step is a big break and wrench for me I need hardly assure you. I have passed all my life in the Liberal ranks, most of it under your leadership. I have done my best through its medium to render such services as I could to my country, and I had hoped it might be possible still to find a useful field of activity and influence in its ranks. But I find this impossible under the circumstances created and I prefer to be an open opponent than an internal dissident. I shall, of course, after writing this letter, no longer consider

Sir Alfred leaves the Liberals

myself a member of the Liberal Party, and shall take, in due 1926 course, the necessary steps resulting from my decision.

May I say that I cannot close this letter without expressing my thanks to you for all the personal kindness and help to me in all the many years of our political association.

Yours sincerely,

ALFRED MOND.

The storms which arose in the wake of Mond's decision were varied in character. Lord Oxford chose the phrase of political safety. He had never liked Mond wholeheartedly and when he was approached by the press, he 'could give no opinion'.

Lady Oxford was not so restrained. Although she thought Mr Lloyd George had 'behaved *disgracefully*' to Sir Alfred, she could not view his change without protest. She wrote:

Dearest Sir Alfred,

I am terribly vexed and truly sorry for your decision. If we had only waited till the meeting¹ and then when we heard the decision it would have been so much wiser, and for every reason fairer. This is what your hero Lloyd George has done for the Party! How well I remember telling you at the Keebles that you had backed the wrong horse and though I see a lot of Ll. G. and get on very well with him (as no brighter, more intelligent little fellow ever lived), I have not been bamboozled by him as your Ll. G. lot have. He has not changed; he has always been an ignorant, untrustworthy politician, and no one will ever be taken in by him. You are joining a Protectionist Party for reasons which you know have not been decided even. I don't understand and never shall understand people swallowing their principles like you and Winston.

I am a friend of yours and am not writing in a temper, but because I feel it was not the moment to desert. There is a great

¹ The Meeting of the National Liberal Federation.

Alfred Mond

1926 deal more Liberalism in the country than all of you think, and though your defection will give pleasure to our enemies, you cannot expect it to give pleasure to me or all of us who don't believe in programmes but in principles. This is the time to rally towards a party that is in low water. Except Baldwin, there is not a Tory worth following—even Baldwin can't make men out of the poor material he has got in his Cabinet.

I think you have made a profound mistake. I hope it won't make you less friendly.

Yours ever,

MARGOT OXFORD.

II

Mr Lloyd George was at Churt, his country home in Surrey. The wireless was turned on in his library. According to the programme of the evening, the orchestra was playing 'La Grande Fantaisie' from *Il Trovatore*. Suddenly, without warning, came the announcement of Mond's resignation and the reading of his letter to Lord Oxford. The Liberal leader's response to the telephone enquiries from the newspapers, which followed in a few minutes, was immediate and true to his cult for words. He said that 'like another notorious member of his race, Alfred Mond has gone to his own place'. Mr Lloyd George had turned to the Acts of the Apostles to find his venomous metaphor. The reference was to Judas who 'by transgression fell'. Mr Lloyd George was too angry at the moment to realise what a handsome compliment he had paid to himself. Alfred Mond had written a second letter, to Mr Lloyd George. He had intended posting this after Lord Oxford had been informed, as Leader of the Party. When Mr Lloyd

George's anger was reported to Mond, he tore up 1926 the second letter, which he was holding to post to Mr Lloyd George that afternoon.

The issues were too serious for these momentary storms to be considered as anything more than passion without thought. Mr Lloyd George was deeply concerned and he had his own case to present.¹ He has since said:

Mond did not change his party for his own ends. I think many reasons may have been involved, but one of them was because of his own son. One day, not so very long before, Mond asked me to lunch.² We talked of the party and he said, 'The prospects are bad'. They certainly were.

'Take my son,' said Mond, 'there is a young fellow with gifts. What does the party hold out for him?'

I think therein lies one great reason why Mond wished to change and associate himself with a party which would give his son broader scope for a career in politics.

What made me angry on the night, when the news came over the wireless, was because he had sent his letter to Asquith and not to me. Therein lies the reason for my bitterness. And Asquith was not the leader of the party in the House. I was bitter and I hit out. It was not because Mond had changed. Winston Churchill changed his party and I never quarrelled with him. It was discourteous and ungrateful of Mond to announce his decision without writing to me, and you must remember that it was I who twice gave Mond office in my Government, against definite opposition from almost everybody except Bonar Law.³ And he wrote to Asquith! Asquith

¹ Mr Lloyd George outlined his point of view as expressed above, in an interview which he kindly granted to the author at Churt on February 15, 1932.

² At 35, Lowndes Square, October 8th, 1925.

³ Mr Lloyd George referred to his first Government of 1916-1918, when Sir Alfred Mond was First Commissioner of Works.

1926 who had snubbed him; Asquith who had never even given him an under-secretaryship.

It was not grateful of him to send me the news through the wireless, to the very room where we had sat many times, talking as only Mond could talk. For he did belong to the intellectual aristocracy.

In changing, Mond turned away from his opportunity of greatness. He was the man to work out my land policy. He had a wider outlook than others. At that time, we had the only antiquated land system in the world, excepting Spain. And now Spain is dealing with her problem. Only the Liberals can reconstruct because they have no prejudices. Mond could have translated my policy into action. He was just the man to do it. He was the best informed man I ever met in political circles. He could give you a better general survey of a problem and he brought to politics his astonishing knowledge of industry. Mond had rare qualities. He had no petty weaknesses, no malice. I never saw rancour in him.

I am certain that he did not like the thought of his son's political career being in the arctic regions of Liberalism. He wanted to transplant the young tree. That, I think, was one of the main reasons for his going over to the Conservative Party. For he was a Liberal through and through, and he always had a contempt for Baldwin's capacity.¹

¹ The present Lord Melchett has contributed the following note bearing on Mr Lloyd George's observation:

'Mr Lloyd George is quite wrong in attributing my father's motive to a desire to help me.

'At that time my father was one of the three or four leaders in the Liberal party and in fact led the party in the House in Mr Lloyd George's absence. I was a very young man without a seat and no prospect of getting one as a Conservative. In the Liberal party my father could be of considerable assistance to me. In the Conservative party he had no particular place and I as a newcomer with a Liberal taint at a time when the Conservative party was full of first rate young men, had no very encouraging prospect as a result of the change. We discussed all these and other aspects of

III

Before announcing his decision, Sir Alfred Mond had 1926
been to see Mr Baldwin in Downing Street. After the
interview was over, Sir Alfred was obliged to leave
London on business, and while away on the Continent,
he wrote a letter to Lady Mond.

As you know, I have long been thinking over the political
position. It has continually become more intolerable and after
a long talk with Henry,¹ who was most helpful, I last night
came to the decision that I must act speedily. I consequently
saw the Prime Minister this afternoon and had a long, frank and
very friendly talk with him. I told him I had decided to join
the Conservative Party and give him my support. It has all
been very difficult to decide, but I feel that you will approve.
I could work with Baldwin and be of some help to the country.
While at present there is nothing but a mass of intrigue and
wrangle. I shall either write to or go and see Baldwin at
Chequers over the week-end. If you can manage to be in town
when I return and I could have a talk with you before writing
to Baldwin, I should be very pleased....

Punch, for ever the wise and witty spectator of our
political game, contemplated the interview between
Mr Baldwin and Sir Alfred and published its cartoon,
'The Catch of the Season'.

the problem but always came back to the same point: that the
Liberal party, weak and full of personal intrigue, could no longer
help but only hinder the progress of the country, which needed
ten years' freedom from political anxiety and of steady government,
which the Conservative Party alone could give it, in order to
recover from the effects of the war.'

¹ His son.

CHAPTER XXVIII

I

1926 **SIR ALFRED MOND** was now obliged to reconstruct all his political life. Only a little time before his withdrawal from the Liberal Party, the Carmarthen Liberal Association, so concerned in the laws governing agriculture, had passed a resolution against the Lloyd George Land Policy, with a sweeping majority of two hundred. It seemed then that they would support their member in his war against what they mutually agreed to be the thin edge of the wedge of Socialism. But when Mond's resignation was announced, their resolution was forgotten. They wrote and told Sir Alfred that they had lost confidence in him and that it was the wish of the Liberal Association that he should resign.

Sir Alfred's reply was a calm statement to throw into the agitated nest. He wrote:

At the last election, although adopted by the Liberal Association, I polled the whole anti-Socialist vote of the constituency; and, with the full concurrence of my Liberal friends, I pledged myself, if elected, to support a Conservative, rather than a Socialist Government. I still regard myself as the anti-Socialist member for the constituency. Conservative leaders in the constituency worked and spoke for me. They signed my nomination papers, and their followers supported me at the poll. I have received numerous protests, from both Conservatives and Liberals throughout the constituency, against any intention on my part of resigning my seat. Several of these come from leading members of your Association, who have

assured me of their continued support, and of their determination to do everything in their power to secure my return, in the event of my contesting the seat again. In view of the division and disunion of the Liberal Party throughout the country—which is still more intensified within the constituency on account of the Land Policy—I have decided to take no immediate steps to vacate my seat.... 1926

While, as I expressed in my letter to you of 23rd January, I do not intend to exercise my undoubted right—for which there is much precedent—of retaining my seat during the existence of the present Parliament, I always intended that the time and manner of vacating my seat were matters within my judgment and discretion.

Sir Alfred pursued his course calmly.

The *Morning Post* gently pointed out that Mr Lloyd George's Land Policy had cost him 'the ablest and most influential of all his colleagues'. The *Times* said, in a leader, that Sir Alfred had always shown himself 'as a straightforward politician' and that his decision and the manner in which it was made were 'altogether to his credit'. The *Evening News* talked of him as a man of 'serene and constructive outlook' who had already 'proved himself a sound prophet'.

Sir Alfred's daughter¹ heard the news by accident and went to him for confirmation.

'Yes, it is quite true', he told her. 'I did not want to wait to be stabbed in the back. It is a question of Socialism or anti-Socialism. There is no room for any party which does not line itself up with either one of these causes, definitely and passionately.'

'But this had to come. We had to part. One adores Lloyd George. But that is only the first quality required in a leader; that he should be able to make people follow him. One follows

¹ Viscountess Erleigh.

1926 Lloyd George in the same way as one follows a woman one loves. Not in the least blind to her faults, but forgiving them... forgiving everything.'

Then Sir Alfred returned a poisoned arrow, in exchange for the reference to Judas. He said:

The hindrance to Lloyd George's greatness is that he cannot bear a man who has the instincts and code of a gentleman near him for long. It gives him an inferiority complex.

II

For a moment Mond cast his thoughts into the future. He said, 'If the present Government left, you would have a Socialist Government under Mr Ramsay MacDonald, or a combination Government. The first thing would be that foreign balances would disappear, the bank rate would go up, finance would be impeded and unemployment would follow'.

He showed a deeper aspect of the effect of the change upon him in the admission that he was an older man. Mellowness was coming to the fighter. But it was mellowness which had nothing to do with weakness. A sword is no less sharp for being sheathed. Indeed, with the softening of his speech, there came greater strength of action. He thought it 'barbarous' that 'men of the same race, living in the same country, citizens and electors in the same state, worshipping in the same places of worship, should not find a more human, a better way of dealing with differences than by prolonged lock-outs and strikes'.

Then he added to his speech a note of Fascism, a notion of one strong party in power, instead of warring elements, squandering the intelligence and energies of



“THE CATCH OF THE SEASON”

From the Cartoon in *Punch* by Bernard Partridge.

the best men in the country upon battles instead of 1926 achievements.

I am convinced the days of the old dog fight are gone, the days when we could with immunity have oppositions and parties in the country, which alternately went to victory and defeat. The great Fundamentals are the maintenance of the Throne, the maintenance of private property, the maintenance of the rights of the individual to the fruits of his produce, and the right to leave it to whom he would....Times are too serious and problems too difficult to go on repeating the old party fights. We want the best brains and hearts to come and work together as we did during the war....Learn the simple lesson, agreement is better than strife....

Once in his speech, Sir Alfred struck a personal note, a rare thing for him to do. His politics were never consciously self-revealing.

He said, 'I have nothing more to gain or seek in the political field. I have held office in State at the time of the country's greatest crisis. I have had as much political honour as any man may require, and I would gladly leave the work to younger hands'.

If there was one regret, one sense of failure which clouded his recollections of Westminster, it was because he had never become Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had seen so many Chancellors without his training. As an older man, this was the one office he coveted and the one office in which he felt that his experience and talents would have reached fulfilment.

III

1927 By this time, Mr Baldwin had extended a cold hand to welcome his new supporter to the Conservative side of the House. In the months which preceded Mond's elevation to the Peerage, he sat with the Tories, much to the chagrin of his Liberal friends, who greeted his first appearance with booing. The limitations of human nature made it impossible for anybody to believe that anything but social ambition prompted Mond to ask for a Peerage. 'A bold Accusation doth at first draw such a general Attention, that it gets the World on its side', said Lord Halifax.

Melchett slowly emerged from the doubts and angers of the politicians, and when he was ultimately raised to the House of Lords, he amazed the dignified and ancient company of Peers by making his maiden speech on the very day upon which he was introduced. The ceremony passed, and as is the custom, he returned to the Chamber to listen to the debate. He happened to arrive in the midst of a debate upon Housing. Lord Melchett could not resist the bait. He stood up and poured the experience of the Ministry of Health upon the surprised Peers. It seemed that the change from Liberal to Tory, from Commons to Lords, was not to mean a cessation of his fighting power or any falling off of his ideas.

In the main, Lord Melchett was welcomed into the Upper House. On the first day, Lord Salisbury followed Lord Melchett's extraordinary action in speaking upon the day of his introduction, by referring to the 'great advantage' it was to have him as a new

member and he referred to him as 'a master' of his 1927 subject. But the acceptance of the Peers and the Conservatives was more intellectual than social, and when Sir John Norton Griffiths arranged a Conservative dinner of welcome for him at the Carlton Club, not one front bencher of the Tory party did him the honour of attending. Lord Melchett's attitude towards the dinner was typical and amusing. Somebody suggested that he might dine under more glorious auspices than those of Sir John Norton Griffiths. 'Well', he answered, 'it is the only dinner I have been asked to.'

Sometimes, a Peer would be excited to violence by some aspect of Lord Melchett's politics. In the debate upon the derating proposals in January of 1929, Lord Russell attacked Lord Melchett for having changed his opinions since 1923. Why a politician should remain intellectually stagnant was more manifest than explained by Lord Russell, who referred to Lord Melchett as once having been a 'gentleman called Sir Alfred Mond who had changed his party and his name'. It is curious to read Lord Melchett's notes and letters and find no trace of the pain such snubs must have caused him. Bitterness there must have been. It emerges sometimes, in a phrase. But he never crystallised his feelings into complaint.

Perhaps in these later years Lord Melchett showed confidence in himself which must often have surprised the House of Lords. 'I may claim to have some expert knowledge upon the subject under debate', was part of the first sentence he had spoken in the House. The second time he spoke was in answer to a rambling peroration of Lord Parmoor. The subject of turning coal into

1927 petrol came into the debate and Lord Melchett declared, 'I happen to know more about that subject than most people...'. Again in the Dead Sea Salts Concession debate he began, '...perhaps I know more about the Dead Sea and about chemical industry than some of the Noble Lords...'.

But, if there was arrogance in Melchett's manner, there was also a store of knowledge to justify his speeches and his assumption of authority. One day in the Lords, his passions against Socialism got the better of him and his attack upon the 'foolish and mad doctrines' of Russia were so violent and his plea to the Lords as 'one of the last refuges of dignity in this country' was so dramatic that Lord Cecil stood up and said he 'must restrain himself', and that his 'youthful enthusiasm was getting the better of him'.

'When one is old, one does not change. One only becomes more so', Melchett once said. It was true of himself.

Lord Melchett's return to industry was opportune, as far as the fortunes of his father's companies were concerned. By this time Brunner, Mond and Co. was vastly powerful, but the company needed a new guiding hand. Sir Alfred had been obliged to abandon his commercial interests during his years of office and also in the years which followed the fall of Mr Lloyd George's Coalition. As a statesman, who had filled two offices with signal success, Melchett went back into industry with increased power and prestige. From the distresses of politics, he passed into a year of deep personal anxiety in industry. Roscoe Brunner was chairman of the company. The affairs of Brunner, Mond and Co.

reached a state where it was necessary for the directors 1927
to reconstruct the executive control of the company.
They pressed Lord Melchett to accept the chair-
manship and supersede Roscoe Brunner. Eventually
he did so, but with reluctance, and after proposing
many alternatives. He knew it meant the final separation
from politics which fascinated and interested him, and
that his part in the development of the chemical in-
dustry of Great Britain would demand more of his
time and energy than he wished to give.

The details of a sad family history do not belong to
this book, but it is necessary to recall the tragic death
of Roscoe Brunner and his wife, a few months after he
resigned from the chairmanship of the company.
Brunner had been the friend of Alfred Mond's child-
hood and he had acted as best man at his wedding. The
complications of the change in chairmanship and the
subsequent death of Brunner and his wife cast the gloom
of tragedy over Lord Melchett's return to industry.

CHAPTER XXIX

I

1926-1927 ONE of Lord Melchett's secretaries, who was with him for thirty years, has said to the biographer, 'I always felt that the chief's talents were wasted in politics. He was able to do more for his country as an industrialist'. It was to this sphere that Lord Melchett returned when he left the Liberal Party. The last years of his life were dominated by four interests. Or perhaps we might define them as three interests and a passion. The interests were the Melchett-Turner Conference, the Rationalisation of Industry, and Empire Economic Unity. The passion which completed and shortened his life was Zionism. The three great interests are easily grouped together because they were related, all growing out of Lord Melchett's development as a politician and industrialist during the war.

II

The violent physical effort of the war, and the primitive impulses behind its glorification of character had a profound and revolutionary effect upon Alfred Mond's philosophy. Ever since the Napoleonic flame, the national character of England had not been tested. She had thrived through the industrial revival, to which the Mondses had belonged. She had been rich, complaisant and self-indulgent at the end of the great Victorian century. In the first ten or twelve years of the new

century it had seemed as if she were on the highroad to decadence. Every fortune and richness had fallen into her hands. Alfred Mond was identified with these successes. Britain's Empire was vast and it had been amassed with little effort. True there had been a Clive with his sword to repress the impudent, and a Scott with his charts to spread the red ink of the Empire into a new corner of the world. But these were the rare men, the throw-backs to the heroic age. The mass of English people were fat and contented. The fortunes which came to their ancestors with brave plunder and discovery, now arrived through the post as dividends. 1926-1927

Alfred Mond had talked again and again of this state of life about him. He would sit at Melchet Court during the week-end, with his own children and their friends. Younger politicians would listen to him. He liked to use a loggia on the terrace in the warm, summer evenings and there, warming to the occasion because he had young listeners, he would talk. Once his son said to him, 'I look forward to the day when you are an old man, wise and quiet, enjoying all the beautiful things here. I can work in London all the week and come down for the week-ends, to talk things over with you. And then I can go back to London refreshed with your advice and knowledge'.

His father's reply was brief and surprising. 'That's rubbish. If I became an old man, sitting in a chair, my judgments would not be worth a damn. Much better if you stayed away from me and worked out things for yourself. I would only confuse your judgments if I were not at the scene of action. No! You are wrong.'

And then the war came. Melchett saw the com-

1926-1927 *plaisant* Englishers arise and throw away their sluggishness. Their swords had not rusted since Napoleon's day. He saw the passion spread over the Empire and it aroused him too. 'I did not believe it possible', he said, as he heard of the Australians who had called the English decadent, rushing to their colonial ports and sailing for England: the South Africans who had harboured resentments of their own war, throwing their shambocks aside and taking down the rifles with which they had thought to do a different kind of battle. Irishmen who thought the very devil himself was enthroned at Westminster, crossing the Channel, all pressing against the railings of Buckingham Palace and singing their anthem. Melchett was amazed.

He said at the end of the war, 'This power has been so terrible and so strange and so unsuspected that any honest man must adjust all his philosophy and all his principles to reckon with this power. They have used it well in war. I hope to God we use it well in peace'.

III

It was from this vast notion that Alfred Mond wove his ideas upon labour, industry and Empire union. He said that the post-war problems showed that 'the whole trend of industrial relations has been for the smaller to merge into larger units'. The war had turned the kaleidoscope and instead of a pattern of small countries, there was a pattern of bigger areas. 'The same principle', he said, 'must be used in industry.' He had seen the opposed political parties rationalised into a Coalition to conduct a war. He had seen countries rationalised into an allied force to fight the war. Now he dreamed of the

Post-war problems

divergent groups of capital, management and labour 1926-1927
drawn into a communal whole, he saw the competing
companies of different industries rationalised into logical
groups and he saw the scattered countries of the Empire
bound together by Imperial Economic Unity. The first
of these to concern him was the rationalisation of the
chemical industry of Great Britain.

CHAPTER XXX

I

1927 **I**N May of 1929, the editor of Nuttall's *Standard Dictionary* wrote to Lord Melchett, admitting that he had found 'some difficulty in giving a definition of the word Rationalisation', in the sense in which it had been used in relation to industrial policy. The editor added, 'We believe your Lordship was the first to use the word in this sense and we should take it as a great favour if you could let us know what you intended the word to convey'.

Lord Melchett sent the following definition to the editor:

The application of scientific organisation to industry, by the unification of the processes of production and distribution with the object of approximating supply to demand.

The definition was adopted and used in the new edition of the dictionary.

In later years, Lord Melchett's contribution to rationalisation was so widely considered and approved that his name was vested with authority when rationalisation was thought of. The Faculty of Economics at Cambridge asked him to speak upon the subject. City companies, Chambers of Commerce, societies in Amsterdam, Harvard University and groups of business men on both sides of the Atlantic, asked him to explain the broad, new fields which were opened up by a word which one would imagine to be simple and ancient in its meaning.

When the post-war problems gripped and shook the masters of industry, they attempted to regain prosperity by returning to pre-war conditions. They detested the thought of rationalisation, and it was a long time before the word was accepted as the inspiration and hope of their industrial resurrection. Because of his ardour and his speed of action, because with Sir Harry McGowan, he lifted the problems involved in rationalisation to a loftier and more intellectual plane than most of his contemporaries, Melchett seemed to make the word belong to his enterprises. Together with Sir Harry McGowan, he drew the companies of Imperial Chemical Industries together in the great merger which involved assets of one hundred million pounds and employees numbering seventy thousand, scattered over the world. 1927

There are many articles and speeches to show the growth of the idea of chemical rationalisation in Melchett's mind. The first interesting thought along this line, which he recorded, concerned the use of nitrogen in the war. 'The Great War was fought on Chili nitrate', he said. 'Any failure on our part to maintain the long sea route would have meant irrevocable national disaster....This state of affairs could never happen again.'

Nitrogen is life: crops and men, explosives and more peaceful essentials all eat nitrogen ravenously. We might recall the early thoughts of Ludwig Mond upon this matter and his earnest wish that science might advance so that nitrogen could be captured from the air. But necessity did not press so hard upon England in Ludwig's day and his ideas were obliged to wait.

England had been able to draw her nitrogen from

1927 Chili during the war. But not so Germany. She had been obliged to turn from the shipping offices and the commercial desk and beg her scientists to help her. While the heavily laden ships moved north with Britain's supplies of nitrate from South America, in Germany, Harber had evolved the high pressure technique, a new and revolutionary discovery which was to change the foundations of industrial chemistry. In England, the Government had already feared the dangers of a stoppage of nitrate supplies. So the vast works of Billingham had been begun, involving millions of pounds. In other directions, too, inventors and scientists had discovered new and terrible secrets. They were secrets used for the deadly business of war. But now they were to be adapted to more peaceful uses. War had startled the inventors to tremendous endeavour and tremendous achievement. The desire to detect submarines under water had brought forth new knowledge in the science of vibrations, the high pressure processes of Germany had discovered the amazing secret of how to extract oil from coal. A notion could change the vast coalfields of Britain into oilfields. When the war was over, the busy inventors found themselves in possession of secrets which were fifty years ahead of the ideas of the industrialists upon whom they urged them.

There was another circumstance which Lord Melchett described in his speeches.¹ In the past, wars had 'been

¹ To the Faculty of Economics at the University of Cambridge, May 24th, 1928.

To the delegates of the Imperial Agricultural Research Conference, October 18th, 1927.

To the British Science Guild, Mansion House, April 24th, 1929.

A speech broadcast from London, November 9th, 1928.

more destructive than constructive and they have left 1927
the world with less means of production..., and poorer
in materials'. The Great War had an opposite effect on
the world. It left the nations with 'huge stocks of all
kinds of materials which, dissipated in the wasteful
course of the war, overwhelmed and over-balanced
the uses of peace. These stocks had to be realised at
what was bankrupt liquidation prices'.

'Then there was another upsetting factor.' The
demands of the war had forced up the capacity of manu-
facture until the countries were depressed by many new
factories for which there was no call now that peace had
come. Whereas the normal rate of increase of con-
sumption before the war was something like five per
cent., war had *doubled* production, in less than four
years. Thus the industrialists were in possession of vast
works and new secrets for which, in the present state of
affairs, there could be no call for perhaps twenty years.

So confident was Lord Melchett in the ultimate
expansion and changes following the war that his firm
bought the Billingham works from the Government, at
a time when manufacturers were moaning over their
state. 'It was no exaggeration of language', he said, 'to
say that with the large scale manufacture of synthetic
nitrogenous fertilisers, a new era had dawned on the
world.' It was especially vital in Great Britain, which
had been dependent for its nitrogen upon the trade of
foreign countries. The synthetic manufacture of nitro-
gen was England's only chance of retaining the power
of living in any future war or economic siege, which
might close the nitrogen ports of South America against
her. So it was that, in a time when men were discreet

1927 about the spending of pennies and afraid to extend their business in any direction, Brunner, Mond and Co. bravely bought Billingham and committed their resources and their shareholders to the future in which they believed.

Lord Melchett spoke also of the ancient methods of the English business man. Small firms, steeped in family tradition, jealous of their past and oblivious of their future, were all struggling against the same difficulties. They had never thought of joining forces in peace as armies did in war. Rationalisation would draw these scattered manufacturers into a great whole, and their labour problems, their scientific difficulties and their administration tangles, would be minimised. Their representation in foreign countries would be strengthened: they would be able to capture foreign markets with concentrated forces, which the small manufacturers could never afford.

Mond saw that rationalisation was already strengthening the chemical manufacturers in Germany and America and, willing as he was to saddle Brunner, Mond with Billingham and its great potentialities, he knew also that his own companies were not strong enough to wrestle with the problems before them. They could not yet take the whole burden of England's chemical industries upon their shoulders. There had come a day, he said, when companies must be willing to throw away their traditions and their family names. Commercial tribes, each under a leader with a name and a treasured identity, must amalgamate into one army.

II

About this time, Lord Melchett met Sir Harry 1926 McGowan, a man who had many of the forces which Melchett lacked. Melchett described him as 'a man with the head of a Roman Emperor, powerful and friendly'. Sir Harry McGowan had begun his life as a junior under Nobel's Explosives Co. Ltd. of Glasgow. In 1918 he had rationalised the explosive and other cognate industries of the country into the holding company of Nobel Industries Ltd. As chairman of this company, he had proved himself to be imaginative, sophisticated in matters of finance and a man of gigantic energy. Sir Harry McGowan and Lord Melchett were as well suited to walk together as John Brunner and Ludwig Mond had been when they planned the building of Winnington sixty years before. Sir Harry McGowan was the man to give Melchett a force which he lacked; the quiet pursuit of one notion, without turning off to new schemes because of the restlessness of his intellect.

The two men met for the first time when Sir Harry McGowan sought out his future colleague and unfolded to him his idea of a great merger in the chemical industry. Some months after this meeting, Lord Melchett went to Brussels to meet the Solvays and the leaders of the German chemical industry. He had been appointed Government Director of the British Dyes Corporation and he saw that it would be an advantage to British industry to make an agreement with the Germans in regard to dyes, in return for certain rights and knowledge of the process of extracting oil

1927 from coal. While he was abroad, the idea of a great English merger of chemical industries on the lines suggested by Sir Harry McGowan assumed more definite shape in Melchett's imagination. In the meantime, Sir Harry McGowan had enlarged on his ideas: they became a definite plan and the speed with which they met and conquered all the difficulties which lay between the idea and the deed is purely romantic. From Brussels, Lord Melchett went with his son to Le Touquet, where they discussed the importance of being able to produce oil from coal. They saw also that the latest German secrets in this process might be obtained in exchange for a dyestuffs agreement with them. From Brussels, Lord Melchett went to New York and his son to London, where he interviewed Lord Ashfield and asked him if he would be prepared to recommend his shareholders to sell the British Dyestuffs Corporation to Brunner, Mond and Co.

Lord Ashfield said he could not consider the proposal without first consulting Sir Harry McGowan who had initiated the idea of the great merger from a different angle. Mr Reginald McKenna, Chairman of the Midland Bank, had urged him to combine British Dyes and Nobels under one control, but Sir Harry had said that such a merger would not be effective unless it also drew in Brunner, Mond and Co., and the United Alkali Company. The question of the merger was then put aside, while Sir Harry McGowan went to South Africa and America. Upon his return, he had breakfast with Lord Ashfield and heard of Melchett's message. Sir Harry McGowan returned to America

in the next boat. When they met in New York, 1927 Lord Melchett and Sir Harry found themselves in complete agreement as to the merits of the merger. On the way back to England, on board the *Aquitania*, they planned the rationalisation of assets which amounted to almost one hundred million pounds. The companies they hoped to control manufactured five thousand products. The stamp duty alone, paid to the British Government for the registration of Imperial Chemical Industries, was to cost one million pounds. When they arrived at Southampton, their plans had taken shape. They enlisted Lord Ashfield of the British Dyes Corporation and Sir Max Muspratt of the United Alkali Company and, in a little room overlooking Smith Square in Westminster, they worked more than twelve hours a day over their scheme. The directors of the four companies they wished to draw into the merger had all been brought up on the tradition of individualism in industry. Family names and family pride were involved. When Melchett and McGowan presented their scheme to the shareholders of these already enormous companies, it had to be so complete that the directors and shareholders would be willing to drown the private identity of their companies in favour of the merger.

For six weeks the two men worked and, forcing their way through a forest of legal agreements and balance-sheets, and all the terrifying details of accountancy, they pressed the affairs of the four companies into one central scheme. But this plan, this prospectus of an entirely fresh power in English industry, was not the end.

1927 Before they could approach the shareholders of the four separate companies, they had to form Imperial Chemical Industries as a separate and new company, with seventy or eighty million shares. To do this they had to pay the one million pound Government stamp duty, before they could offer the shares to the shareholders of Brunner Mond, Nobel Industries, British Dyes and United Alkali. It was one of the biggest risks taken in British industry, but Melchett and McGowan were perfectly suited to each other in the project: Melchett's imagination and McGowan's practical common sense and his knowledge, accumulated during the rationalisation of Nobels—these qualities, and their complete confidence in each other. They were the rare men who never come together in partnership more than two or three times in a generation of industrialists.

When the plans were complete and when it was certain that no less than ninety-five per cent. of the shareholders of the four companies had agreed to transfer their interest to the merger, Lord Melchett and Sir Harry McGowan were able to look out of their office window at the site upon which they wished to build the great offices. There was a big area of land on the river front of Millbank. Here, in the heart of Westminster, the shrine of their ideal was to rise one hundred and twenty feet from the ground, a mountain of stone in which the vast affairs of the merger would be managed.

An architect was called in and, looking out of the window, they showed him the vacant site. They said to him, 'How long will it take you to put a

one hundred and twenty foot building on that site in 1927 stone?’

He answered, ‘It should take five years, but I will do it in two’.

The architect was Sir Frank Baines. He went back to his office and he worked for three weeks on the plans. The building was to contain six million cubic feet. There were to be seven hundred rooms and two and a half miles of corridors. For ten days Baines did not go to bed. At five o’clock one afternoon, the new Directors of Imperial Chemical Industries passed the plans which Baines placed in front of them at their first board meeting, and three hours afterwards, as London was darkening, the steam excavators began work. Sir Frank Baines was the man to join this courageous company. He had built a bomb factory during the war in six weeks.

III

Once certain of his vision, Lord Melchett became utterly ruthless in forcing his issues through. The merger meant, to a great extent, the drowning of his family identity and his father’s name, in a greater and less personal organisation. He obliged his relations to stand upon their merits in the election of directors and many bitternesses and enmities were born as he forged ahead, delighted by Sir Harry McGowan’s energy, sympathy and co-operation, seeing the horizon of his ambitions spread and spread, far beyond the limitations of Winnington. ‘I want men like Reading, Colwyn and Weir, for my directors’, Melchett said. His courage was colossal and, like all men who reject sentimentality

1927 in the pursuits of a purpose, Melchett had to reconcile himself to the idea of making enemies.

The formation of Imperial Chemical Industries caused a sensation in British industry. Pressed upon one side by the German merger and upon the other by the big American combine, Lord Melchett and Sir Harry McGowan had worked quickly and well upon their scheme and, within two years from the time when they crossed the Atlantic, planning the merger, the great offices were built at Westminster, and the enormous staffs of the merged companies moved in to take part in what the *Spectator* called 'a translation of dreams into deeds'.

Lord Melchett could sit in his new office and view the Thames and the carpet of London roofs below him. He could see the dome of St Paul's, which he had watched from the different scene of his rooms in Lincoln's Inn, when he was practising patent law, thirty years before. One might be permitted a less cold review of his achievements than balance-sheets and company reports will allow. Ludwig Mond's ugly duckling had won success against terrible odds and a succession of bad luck. Once when playing at Monte Carlo, Lord Melchett grinned with pleasure over a win he made and he said, 'You know, I have never been lucky. It is an emotion I have never enjoyed except in my little spurts of gambling'. It was true. For the energy and imagination he put into politics and industry, he got a small return. Every time his efforts seemed like being crowned with true honour, some outside power swept the honour away from him. In politics, his first successes were dashed away from him by the war. After

the war, when he had brought the Ministry of Health 1927 to honour and success, the Coalition Government fell and he found himself in the ranks of a weakening party, without hope of further power.

IV

While engaged upon the chemical industries merger, Lord Melchett worked upon the ideas which grew into the Melchett-Turner Conference, and, since the merger and the conference were closely bound together in his theories, it is interesting to find an article which he wrote for the *Spectator*, in November of 1927, in which the merging of the two ideas is indicated. The article is so perfect an explanation of his ambitions and ideas upon the relationship between Industry and Labour that it would be an intrusion to attempt a paraphrase. Lord Melchett wrote:

The question of industrial co-operation, to which some of us have devoted so many years of effort, would seem at last to be moving from the realms of deferred hopes and pious aspirations to those of fruition and reality. On both sides there are men of common purpose coming forward with something definite and constructive in place of vague generalisations. It is high time that we took a firmer hand in moulding our own industrial destinies and in utilising the new spirit of organisation and accommodation which has arisen, to secure the prosperity necessary to lasting peace.

I have often spoken of the three joint-partners in industry, namely, shareholders, management and labour. The great need is the recognition of each of these three factors as equal and essential parts of the industrial organism. The slogan must be 'Partnership in work, pay, play and profits', and the more closely that slogan can be translated into actual practice, the more effectively will the whole organism function.

1927 Each of the three partners is a working partner and plays an essential rôle. Capital, as represented by the shareholders—and most large companies to-day are owned by multitudes of small shareholders—supplies the initiative, takes the pioneering risks, and backs its convictions with solid cash.

Management, the second partner, has a dual rôle. It is in a sense an arbitrator between the other two partners. It is the duty of the directors of our great industrial concerns to have regard to the just claims of the workers, who, after all, are far closer partners in the daily task than are the shareholders.

The third partner, Labour, is perhaps only now being rightfully recognised as such. And every progressive employer and every efficient management welcome this recognition. In the past there has been too much a tendency for Labour to be the tool of political leaders and political parties. The industrial field has been made a political field of war.

The great need is for definite concrete proposals and hard team work in putting the principle of co-operation into practice. There have been great strides in the reorganisation of industry throughout all countries since the war. Certain industries in Britain and the Empire have gained some of the lost leeway and have come more into line with the latest industrial organisations of the Continent and the United States. The future of British industry and its progressive prosperity depends largely upon the extension of the principles of amalgamation and rationalisation. Upon the extension of the same processes depends largely also the establishment of complete industrial co-operation.

In order to give effect to our opinion that it is by definite and concrete proposals that industrial harmony can be secured, the merged chemical industry of which I am chairman has announced the first instalment of a new labour programme. I feel that the proposals are so fundamental and so capable of application to other industries that it may be well to outline them here.

First, in order to give effect to the purpose of having a common labour policy throughout all our works and for all our forty thousand workers, a Central Labour Department has been established with a member of the board as its chief. The Department will have the assistance of an advisory committee to secure the necessary interchange of views between those who frame a policy and those who execute it. It has been a criticism levelled against British industry that executives, busied with diverse problems, have left matters of industrial relationships more or less to look after themselves. The new Department should help to remedy this, and also to eliminate friction and secure ultimate benefits of increased prosperity for all concerned in the industry. 1927

Secondly, we have the establishment of a complete system of Works Councils. These will provide a direct link between the board and the workers of the remotest works and will also help to maintain that essential personal touch which tends to be lost with the growth of larger and ever larger units in industry. We shall have local works councils, general works councils, and, drawn from the other, a central works council in London, over which, as chairman of the company, I shall preside. Thus will be created a direct bond and a personal contact between the head of the company and the lowest paid workman.

Thirdly, in order to meet the workman's legitimate claim for higher status and a greater security, we have created a Workers' Staff Grade to which 50 per cent. of the workers of over five years' service may secure promotion. Once promoted to the staff, they will enjoy privileges and benefits akin to those already enjoyed by the office staffs. They will be entitled to a month's notice of termination of employment and will be on a weekly wage instead of a merely hourly rate of wages.

In these days of increasing education and with the transition from the manual to the machine age of industry, the question of status is of vital importance, and this is how we are endeavouring to satisfy the legitimate desire of the worker for an improved status and a more established security.

1927 Fourthly, we are launching a Workers' Shareholding Scheme. All employees are given the opportunity to purchase the company's ordinary shares at 2s. 6d. below their market price. Moreover, free shares will be granted to each purchaser on a graduated scale; to workers receiving £200 a year or less, one free share will be given for every four purchased; from £201 to £500 one free share for every five and so on. The shares can be paid for in instalments spread over two years, and, in the event of a worker dying before the completion of payment, the company will complete payment and give the shares free to his next of kin. This provides a form of insurance which should be of great value.

Fifthly, in order to meet the workers' legitimate desire for more information as to the running and conduct of his industry, a Works Magazine is to be published monthly, which will also serve as a connecting link between all the workers of the combine.

Such is the broad outline of a programme of concrete proposals towards a better industrial relationship. The keynotes are personal contact, improved status, increased security, co-partnership and information. These are directions by which the goal of complete co-operation can be reached. To maintain Britain's position in the world's markets those who are co-operating in the production of British goods must stand shoulder to shoulder. Industrial co-operation can be created only by those responsible for industry and those responsible for labour working out practical schemes of advantage to both parties and their industry as a whole.

Everybody is agreed that a higher standard of life must be reached and that low wages and long hours are no lasting cure for industrial depression. What is required is high production, cheap costs, and high wages. Only through industrial co-operation can we attain those essentials, but once we have it, I am confident we will be entering upon a new era of prosperity and entering also upon a new ascent in the long climb towards a higher and better civilisation.

Labour

So determined was Lord Melchett to see the fruition 1927 of his schemes for labour in Imperial Chemical Industries that he appointed his son, who in these days always worked in the next room to his father, to be Labour Director, so that he might himself have the closest personal control over labour.

CHAPTER XXXI

I

1927 ONE of the most persistent impressions made upon Signor Mussolini by Lord Melchett, an impression which persisted in the Dictator's mind six years after their meeting, was that he was not a democrat. Signor Mussolini mentioned this twice, with emphasis, when the biographer spoke with him in Rome.

In one sense this was true. But Lord Melchett's apparent arrogance, a nervous defence which he never quite abandoned, very often confused the impression he made upon people. He might never have chosen the label *Democrat* for himself, but the growth of his political interests never removed his deep feeling of responsibility and relationship with his constituents, and it is certain that no man of his time had more passionate concern for the relations between capital and labour: a concern which reached its fullest fruition in the Melchett-Turner Conference, which was engendered in November of 1927. It will be admitted that by this time Lord Melchett had accumulated wide experience. The conference was his greatest effort to use his knowledge in the practices of industrial and public life. The spirit behind his scheme was not new. Bacon had written:

The true method of experiment first lights the candle and then by means of the candle shows the way, commencing as it does with experience duly ordered and digested, not bungling or erratic, and from it educing axioms, and from established axioms again new experiments.

Durant, in his *Story of Philosophy*, has written: 1927

When science has sufficiently ferreted out the forms of things, the world will be merely the raw material of whatever Utopia man may decide to make.

The sentence might be used to bind the achievements of Ludwig and Alfred Mond together. Ludwig Mond had used science to ferret out the forms of things. Alfred Mond wished to complete the philosophic thought and use the raw material to form a Utopia, a Utopia in which there would be a complete understanding between capital, management and labour.

There was a fundamental reason and one reason only why Melchett's life was a failure in the worldly sense. His intellectual energy was so great that neither his own physical energy, the patience of his colleagues nor the slow pace of human progress could keep up with him.

In answer, many might say that this was not unusual: that it was nothing new to have ideas about human progress. The unique position Mond occupied was that of a philosopher who was able to apply his ideas to life. More than any other man, perhaps in contemporary English politics, he tied thought and action together. Therein lay his failure. The philosopher might write, thoughtfully and in perfect phrases. The man of action might still blunder on slowly, in spite of the philosophical guides. There had seldom been a complete marriage between them. Mond was both these men and he broke down beneath the strain of pouring out ideas which were squandered, because his own human effort could never have sustained the strain of putting them into practice.

From the beginning, Lord Melchett's interests had

1927 been with the worker. Winnington had given him his first intimate and unself-conscious relationships with working men. That the relationships grew unself-consciously is important because they were a key to the ease with which he carried on the negotiations in the conference itself. Ludwig Mond had instituted the eight-hour day and an annual holiday for working men, at a time when such a notion had shocked many English employers. From Winnington, Alfred Mond had gone to the Commons. Here again, as early as 1908, he had expressed opinions which showed the trend of his interests. In February he had said, 'All who have been successful manufacturers have early grasped the fact that profits are not to be made out of low wages. There is no greater fallacy than to suppose that low wages mean low cost of production'. In the Sweated Industries Bill of the same session he had said that State interference in trade matters was undesirable. This view was forced upon him when he heard the amateurs in the House discuss industry. It grew until, at the time of the Melchett-Turner Conference, he had decided that affairs of industry should be taken out of the hands of Parliament and dealt with in a kind of third chamber, a National Industrial Council which would draw its members from the Trades Union Congress and an equal number of representatives of the employers. At the beginning of the war he wrote a letter pleading for the 'poor people who know no better', because shopkeepers were charging discount on one pound notes. As Commissioner of Works he had secured for the direct employees of the department, six days leave annually, with pay, and he had anticipated

The Melchett-Turner Conference

the Melchett-Turner Conference in a debate upon the 1927 railway companies and their employees in 1911.¹

After all, the resolution of the railway men is extremely moderate. All they ask is to be admitted to a conference upon the basis of representation....I believe conferences of this kind could do good. I am a great believer in people coming together and talking matters over.

Perhaps Signor Mussolini was right in spite of this interesting record. Perhaps Melchett was an autocrat. In many ways he was autocratic: certainly impatient of the inefficient who worked for him. He ruled his industrial enterprises with the courage and vision of a dictator.

The anger of the British workman has seldom if ever been directed towards efficient dictatorship or industrial autocracy. Its strength and temper have been pitted against the spirit of bourgeois exploitation, the small, grasping merchant or proprietor, the man Lord Melchett had in mind in his second year in the House, when he said that profits were not to be made out of low wages and that there was no greater fallacy than to suppose that low wages meant low cost of production.

Thus armed with very definite views about the relations between workers and employers, Mond wrote down an interesting survey² of the history of Trade Unions in England.

Fifty years before, the Prince Consort had said of the relationship between capital and labour, 'I

¹ Hansard, November 22nd, 1911, columns 1302 and 1303.

² Later used as the basis of a lecture to the Graduate School of Business Administration at the Harvard University, October 9th, 1928.

1927 believe that England will solve the problem first'. Prince Albert had seen in the industrial revolution of the middle of the nineteenth century Britain's opportunity for a Trade Union Movement which would be a key to relations between master and worker for the whole world. He had shocked the mid-Victorian employers by warning them against their own methods. Recalling this early history, Sir Alfred traced the development of the Trade Unions, up to the unfortunate shock of the Taff Vale Judgment¹ of 1901, which 'threatened the existence of Trade Unions by making them financially liable for any damage caused by their "agents" in strikes' including loss of profit through stoppage of work. This sinister judgment was expelled by the Trade Disputes Act of 1906. But there was another judgment, in the Osborne Case of 1909, which showed that authority was still against the powers of the Trade Unions. The Osborne Judgment forbade

¹ This judgment was given in the case of the Taff Vale Railway v. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and Others (1901). In 1900 the railway employees struck work and the Union, on the introduction of 'blacklegs', encouraged picketing. The Company sued the Union officials and the Society itself *in its registered name*, claiming damages and an injunction. The Society applied to be dismissed from the action, claiming that while the Act of 1871 had relieved Trade Unions of criminality and provided for their registration, it made no provision for a Trade Union being suable as a body corporate for damages in tort. Lord Farwell held that it could be so sued. This decision was reversed on Appeal, but reaffirmed by the House of Lords. Between 1871 and 1901, legal doctrine in regard to representative action generally had gradually extended, unnoticed by the Unions, and the decision of 1901 was a great shock because thereby the whole security of Trade Union benefit funds was threatened. The outcome of this case was ultimately the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, Section 4 (1) of which gives a Trade Union complete immunity from action in tort.

the expenditure of Trade Union funds for political 1927 objects. Sir Alfred had seen even this judgment broken down by the Trade Union Act of 1913. 'The Liberals', wrote Sir Alfred, 'cut their own throats by putting this strength into the hands of the Trade Unions, for it has so increased the power of their own party that, instead of being the supporters of the Liberals, they are the opponents.'

Continuing his memorandum, Mond recorded the effect of the war upon the Trade Unions, their increased strength, the realisation of the Government 'that the co-operation of the Unions was essential'. He admitted the willingness with which the Trade Unions gave this support and recorded that, by 1920, the membership of Trade Unions had grown to eight millions. 'Many of its prominent members were in Parliament, a number were or had been Cabinet Ministers, representation on official commissions and similar bodies had become the accepted practice. The General Council of the Trades Union Congress had become the accepted cabinet of the Trade Union movement.'

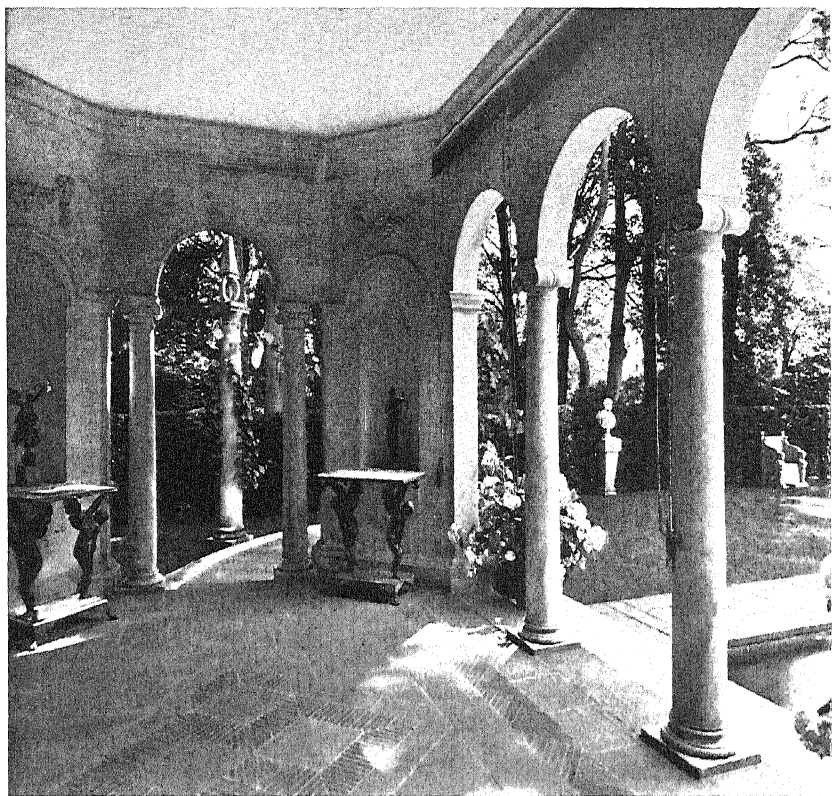
There, he said, the forward movement had ended. The workers and the Trade Union leaders looked upon rationalisation as being the science of the 'big combines' of America. Inhumanity and destruction were inseparable from the American story and the British workers knew that it had been necessary to pass the Sherman anti-Trust Laws to restrict combines in America. Every time there had been a suggestion of British rationalisation in the House of Commons, Labour had recalled the American experiment and had opposed it.

1927 The war had awakened unsuspected powers of character in both employer and worker. Mond wrote of the strength with which they had thrown away the small issues of their relationships, enlarging their vision to take in the broader expanses of war. The magnificence passed soon after 1918. The soldiers of the Dominions went home and allowed their awakened passion to subside. The politicians who were strong in the awful splendour of war, became smaller men when the affairs of government dwindled in importance. The slump of 1921 'brought with it a renewal, with greatly increased force, of the old antagonism and warfare', Melchett wrote. 'The workers saw their standard of living coming down.... Unemployment was on an unprecedented scale.... The Unions set out to win as much as possible from what they felt to be a declining industrial system, by means of a vigorous attack upon the employers. Employers and workmen had relapsed into the old condition of pettiness.'

In 1928, when he spoke to the students of Harvard, Lord Melchett recalled these sentences and added, 'This movement resulted in the General Strike of 1926. As was inevitable in a constitutional country like Britain, the General Strike was a ghastly failure'.

During the years between 1918 and 1927, Lord Melchett gave his attention to the relations between employers and employed. The complacency and obstinacy of the employers exasperated him: still more so the half-heartedness of all official efforts to bring peace to the opposing factions.

In the spring of 1927, at the Trades Union Congress, the chairman recalled the general strike of the year



A LOGGIA IN THE GARDEN OF MELCHET COURT.

before and said that it was time that the employers and the employed met together to discuss means of preventing another strike. 1927

Here was the voice for which Lord Melchett had been waiting. He said, 'This is an amazing appeal—a privilege which we must not allow to pass. The employers must make a corresponding response'. Sir Harold Bowden and other employers had been nursing a similar idea, but it was in Melchett's name that the conference was called. He drew a number of employers around him; men like Sir Hugo Hirst, Lord Ashfield, president of the Federation of British Industries, Lord Weir, Lord Barnby and Mr Lennox Lee. They joined him in sending out the invitations to the Trade Unions—the first time in all the history of Labour that representative employers and organised workers were to meet to discuss the broader conditions of Industry and Labour questions generally, without particular attention to any specific dispute. Up to this time, there had been two bodies, the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations dealing with Labour questions, and the Federation of British Industries dealing with commercial problems. But there was no one responsible body to which the employees could turn for general and amicable discussions.

The employers addressed the Trades Union Congress as follows:

As there appears to us, after investigation, to be no single existing organisation of employers which can take the initiative in inviting discussions to cover the entire field of industrial reorganisation and industrial relations, we desire, as a representative group of employers, to extend to the General Council

1927 of the Trades Union Congress an invitation to meet us to consider questions relating to these matters....We realise that industrial reconstruction can be undertaken only in conjunction with and with the co-operation of those entitled and empowered to speak for organised labour...those who are as vitally interested in the subject as ourselves....

The invitation was frank and generous minded and the response of the Trades Union Congress was no less so. Mr J. H. Thomas said at the first meeting of the conference, when men like Mr Ernest Bevin, Mr Ben Turner, Mr Walter Citrine, Mr A. J. Cook, Mr Tillett and Mr Gosling were at the table, that Lord Melchett had persuaded the Trades Union Congress to do something which six months earlier they had refused to do for the British Government and that it was a great testimonial to the trust which the Labour Movement had in the fairness of Lord Melchett's judgment. It was in many ways the crowning day of his life, when he sat down as chairman of the conference. Mr A. J. Cook and Mr Ben Tillett became his friends and Lord Melchett's letters include some from both these Labour leaders, letters so affectionate and sincere that they must have been a benison to him in the times when his motives were misunderstood by professional politicians and his fellow industrialists.

Lord Melchett's interest in the worker was in no sense sentimental. In 1921, at his first Cabinet Meeting, he had been obliged to consider and decide whether it would be necessary to bring troops back to England in order that the power of the Government should not be destroyed by the three principal Trade Unions. In a letter written to Mr Lloyd George in 1915, following

the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech at the Trades Union Congress, Lord Melchett had urged certain war measures upon the leader: measures which would awaken a sense of war duty in the Trade Unionists. He referred to the Boilermakers' Society as 'one of the most obstinate and pig-headed Trade Unions in the country, and well-known for causing trouble at all times'. Lord Melchett had been exasperated at the moment because of the slow way in which the industrialists caught up with the accelerated speed of war time. 'You are dealing with so unimaginative a people', he wrote to Mr Lloyd George, in making his suggestions for forcing the workmen to realise their duty, 'that you are bound to do something fairly violent before you make them understand.... Working men after all are very much like children; they are impressed when they come up against somebody who knows his own mind and insists on having his own way.'¹

This interlude clears Lord Melchett of any suggestion of sentimentality over the worker, if his record of practical common sense could admit such a possibility.

II

The first meetings of the conference were held in the rooms of the Royal Society at Burlington House. The tradition of the rooms was of men of good will and science, a tradition dating from the time of Charles II and the Restoration, a tradition in which both Ludwig and Alfred Mond were concerned, for they had the rare distinction of both being Fellows of the Society. This

¹ September 12th, 1915.

1927 is a place where one might print again the quotation from Durant, a building in which science had 'sufficiently ferreted out the forms of things' so that the world might have the raw material with which to make 'whatever Utopia man may decide...'.

The Utopia was not easily born. At the first meeting, Mr A. J. Cook attacked the employers and almost destroyed the chances of any success coming to the Conference. He was still at the stage in his life when he felt more than he thought and his attack was unreasonable. The employers remained silent: they did not reply to him and, with the slow growth of understanding between both parties, they saw the first glimmer of a single purpose, shared between them.

Although it may be said that the Melchett-Turner Conference produced limited results because its recommendations were not fully adopted, the long weeks of discussion were not wasted. They led to the now well-known Joint Council of the Trades Union Congress with the Federation of British Industries and the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations.

Recalling the Conference in his speech at Harvard, Lord Melchett said:

The high purpose of the conference could not be more amply illustrated than by the fact that the first credited resolution published to the world was a joint Memorandum on the Gold Reserve and its Relations with Industry. The text of that Memorandum is available. It is merely necessary for me to point out that the issue of that Memorandum to the Chancellor of the Exchequer had a definite result in the policy which he pursued in giving greater elasticity when the bank note issue and the Treasury issue were amalgamated this year.

The Melchett-Turner Conference

On the subject of rationalisation....The conference determined that this tendency should be welcomed and encouraged insofar as it leads to improvements in the efficiency of industrial production, services and distribution, and to the raising of the standard of the living of the people. 1927

Lord Melchett said that if his listeners compared the resolutions of the conference with the agenda, they might appear fragmentary.

‘I can assure you’, he said, ‘that from the point of view of British Industry, they are fundamental and important. They inaugurate the advent of a new era in industry in Great Britain.’

He recalled his earlier statement :

The old industrial revolution must give way to the new. The old industrial revolution was the age of steam and the application of power to production. The new industrial revolution, upon the threshold of which we already are, will be the age of the machinery of organisation. Machinery has already been organised.

Perhaps the greatest proof of the influences of the Conferences was given us in 1932, when two delegates of the Trades Union Congress were asked to join in the Ottawa Conference. And the presence of the Industrial advisers is traceable to the ideas which inspired the Melchett-Turner Conference. Mr Walter Citrine, of the Trades Union Congress, has said to the biographer that Melchett’s action in 1927 was ‘symptomatic of a state of mind’, that it was an ‘idea’ which was new. He has added that the influences of that idea are still felt in the activities of employer and workman to-day and that, when the final history of Labour in this country comes to be written, Lord Melchett’s name will begin an important chapter.

- 1927 The Melchett-Turner Conference may not have been more than the threshold, but it was a threshold built of entirely new stone and it has led to the building of a relationship between capital and labour which is slowly becoming richer and finer, with the development of human nature which is, after all, the beginning and the end of all human endeavour.

CHAPTER XXXII

I

ALFRED MOND had spoken of the Empire at 1906-1923 Salford, when he was still an eager, young man. The political fledgling had denounced 'the great fetish of colonial expansion'. His view then was the view of most other people in England. Even the Great War was not enough to remove all the cold patronage with which Englishmen viewed the colonies, and to this day, there persists a prejudice against the unfortunate fellow whose manners have been roughened upon tinned beef and too much sunshine. The Prince of Wales was the first great British Statesman, without portfolio it is true, to become fully conscious of the Empire, with knowledge and imagination. He did more than any man to correct the kind of narrow ignorance which was exemplified in Mond's youthful announcement, that colonial expansion was no more than a 'great fetish'.

The Prince of Wales was a boy when Mond spoke at Salford. England was still groping under the clouded memory of Botany Bay and of vulgar Australian sheep farmers who, it was feared, might crack a stock whip in a drawing-room, once they got past the door.

There was another reason why the young Alfred Mond did not enjoy an enlightened or intelligent view of the Dominions. His Free Trade views and his knowledge of the Continent made him European-minded and it was inevitable that he should see Great Britain as part of the group of European countries.

1906-1923 The 1906 election had brought the problem near to him again. This dramatic election, which raised the Liberals to dizzy authority and sent the Tories beyond the country, into the wilderness, had feasted upon the scandal of Chinese labourers, employed by the 'sordid' mine-owners of the Rand. The feelings over this inquisition had become so violent that a politician and soldier of General Seely's distinction had crossed from the Conservatives to the Liberals, disgusted because the Tories had condoned the influx of Chinese into the mining areas. Mond had been active in searching for the truth in this affair. His interest had made him turn again to the Empire problem and he had remodelled his opinions. He said, in later years, 'I nearly followed Chamberlain. Had he stuck to the Empire, I believe I should have done so. But when he capitulated to the Tories and returned to the old dogmas of insular protection, I was against him'.

The Great War had to come before Alfred Mond was completely shaken from his European point of view. Then he turned about completely and saw the British Empire as a group of countries, so strong as a whole, that they could put up a bold face to the rest of the world. Among Mond's early war duties had been his work on the Balfour of Burleigh Committee, for the consideration of post-war trade. He had been obliged to resign before the report was framed, because he was appointed to the Government. But there are documents to show that the war and the affairs of this committee caused him to see the Empire in a new light.

In the Melchett-Turner Conference, he saw capital management and labour as groups working for the

common good. In the rationalisation of the chemical industries, he saw industry strengthened so that its power was formidable. Along the same line of thought, he saw the countries of the Empire rationalised and bound together for their common good, in what he later called Empire Economic Unity. He was the first Minister to put a scheme for Empire Free Trade before the Cabinet. We have the statement of Mr Lloyd George to prove this. Speaking at Swansea on November 9th, 1922, Mr Lloyd George said, 'Mr Bonar Law, the present Prime Minister, in his speech at Glasgow, referring to the question of Empire Trade, said there was a scheme put before the Cabinet, the late Government, for the purpose of using the National credit for the development of Empire Free Trade. "Who's scheme was that?" asked Mr Lloyd George. He answered his own question by saying, "It was the scheme of Sir Alfred Mond, and the only positive programme proclaimed to the country by the present Administration, was the proposal left them by Sir Alfred Mond"'.

This was in the days before their quarrel, when Sir Alfred had called Mr Lloyd George a man of 'commanding ability and such great genius', a man who 'did not have enough confidence in his own genius'. The tune of their relationship was to change, but Lord Melchett's ideas of Empire Free Trade remained. When the war had passed, the old muddle of politics was restored, but Melchett's logical train of thought upon the Empire was not changed. He had regretted the passing of a great opportunity. The end of the war, when Britons, Canadians, Australians and South Africans were bound together in a blind passion of

1906-1923 loyalty, was the time in which the politicians might have struck home. Then, Empire Free Trade would have been an inspiration. Mond had been so certain of the need for Empire development that, in 1922, he had proposed his great hundred million pound scheme to the Cabinet for solving the unemployment problem by Empire Settlement. Earlier in the year he had told the Cabinet that it would pay to spend money liberally on transferring population from this country to the overseas Dominions. He was not so foolish as to suppose that this would be a direct cure for unemployment, but he visualised the creation of new markets. He saw, too, the threat of the permanent surplus of population, for which he could see no solution without a vigorous policy of migration.

Mr Lloyd George had been so certain of Mond's scheme that he had promised the money to him. But, as usual, the deflationist tendency of the Treasury and the Bank of England prevailed and the idea had passed away, as far as practical politics were concerned.

Since Empire Free Trade has become almost an established fact, these steps in the development of the idea are perhaps interesting and worthy of being printed in a record. Now, in these enlightened days of 1932, a loyal statement about the Empire may taste like a cliché. But it was not always so. Even with the lesson of the war, British politicians and business men were loth to admit that loyalty and service were mutual and that, if *accepted* from the colonies, they must also be returned, in equal if not greater measure. In 1923, Mond made another effort to impress his faith in the Empire upon the politicians. He wrote an article in the

'L.G.' *Magazine* and discussed 'how far the British Empire could become an Economic Unity'. He wrote of the example of America, 'one great free-trade community...the largest free-trade complex in the world', and he referred to the *tragedy* of the British Empire which, owing to its geographical distribution, had become 'a series of States, each one of which, in endeavouring to develop its own industrial resources', was placing, between all its constituent parts, 'barriers in the way of the free exchange of commodities to the best advantage'. 1906-1923

'If anyone regards the British Empire as a whole', Alfred Mond had added, 'it is quite obvious that every endeavour would be made to produce those commodities in each part which could be most cheaply produced there. No one developing a large estate would afforest his home farm or make a market garden of his most unprofitable land. The British Empire, regarded as an estate, would not erect artificial barriers between its cheapest manufacturing centres and its cheapest food-producing areas.'

Mond may not have been alone in his conviction, but his was the most persistent voice in these early days, when his scheme still fell as a novelty upon the ears of his listeners. It was viewed with boredom by his English contemporaries and with suspicion by his dominion readers. After all, the dominions had been sadly treated at Britain's hands. To believe in a mother is all very well. The simple emotions of honour and loyalty and love are possible in a child, providing the mother turns now and then, with some benevolent gesture of gratitude, to show that the avowals of the

1906-1923 child are not falling upon deaf ears. Australia and Africa and New Zealand had learned a hard lesson. In their own phrase, 'Being loyal is all right, but it isn't all beer and skittles'. Excepting the Prince of Wales, there had never been one British statesman after the war who had truthfully approached them, after crossing the sea, without patronage and something of the manner of a Lord Mayor, bestowing a good conduct medal upon a boy scout. That was typical of almost every word spoken in England about the Dominions. It was typical of every effort at conciliation. Sometimes, a British Prime Minister would hold a whispered conversation with somebody in the Colonial Office, and they would produce fifty of the more vague and lesser knightages and two hundred of the totally obscure Orders of the British Empire and scatter them, like bonbons, among the scrambling colonial youngsters. It was well to show them that loyalty was still a commendable virtue and that while true hearts were not as good as coronets, they were at least worth an O.B.E. The description may be vulgar, but the situation was more so. This was a state—a relationship between Britain and her colonies and dominions which was far from creditable.

The author observed the journey of the Prince of Wales through two of the Dominions, with the honour of a close and privileged view and, writing as a colonial, he feels himself true and mild in saying that if His Royal Highness had not made his tours of the Empire, suspicion and discontent would have grown until, in this day, Empire Free Trade would be impossible. Instead of South Africa making one trade

agreement with Germany, the whole Empire would 1906-1923
have set about its business, tired and shocked by the
apathy of Great Britain. Recoiling from humbug, rich
in heart and not enslaved by intellectual theories, the
Prince did more for the Empire than the British
Government. He certainly had the glory of his position
and the charm and sincerity of his speech to embellish
every word he spoke in favour of the Empire. Lord
Melchett was not so well equipped. But when he did
speak, his sincerity flashed before his dominion listeners
and he almost convinced them that there was still a
small company of people in England who were able to
look beyond the ends of their own noses. Mond aptly
expressed the dangers of the day in saying, 'The
destruction of the Empire will never come through
tyranny in its dominions, but only through the apathy
of Great Britain herself'.

He made a great effort to stir Canadian thought up-
on the subject when he spoke to the Canada Club at
Toronto. His speech was obviously of unusual in-
fluence and merit, for it is quoted by other speakers to
this day. 'Up to now', he said, 'the Empire has
grown by a series of accidental circumstances. Now
has come the time for a long-planned, intentional,
design.'

II

From 1924 to 1926, Empire Free Trade was allowed to 1924
rest from politics. Mr Baldwin was in power and, in
spite of his fiasco in 1922, when he failed to govern the
country upon his Protection promises, he was again
returned upon the same shop-worn promise. So the

1924 virtues of Empire Free Trade, or of any breach in the tariff walls, were barely whispered in the House.

As far as Lord Melchett was concerned, the next step of importance in the Empire Economic Unity story was his speech in Toronto, in 1926. It was brave and refreshing in its thought and one can do no better than discover Melchett's feelings in his own words:

'I hope you will not resent my saying so,' he said, 'you who occupy half a continent...are only after all a small part of the British Empire. Great Britain is only a small part of the British Empire. Australia is only a small part. India is a small part when compared with the Empire as a whole, and I feel that strongly.'

Melchett then recalled Lord Salisbury's retort when the relations between Great Britain and another country were being discussed. Lord Salisbury had advised his listeners to study big maps. Melchett urged the same advice upon the Canadians:

I would advise every citizen of the Empire to study big maps: not to allow the pressure of our local circumstances to obscure the vision of the whole; not to shrink back from any problem because of its magnitude, nor to despair of its solution because of its difficulty.

I want to ask you to join with me in forming some conception of the economic strength and unity that could be built up by the whole Empire. The question is one of extreme difficulty. Nobody is more aware of it than I am. You cannot suddenly dislocate existing manufactures. You cannot suddenly destroy an industry created under one fiscal system or another, but unless you have some ideal, some object in view within the Empire, what is going to happen? Crucial questions arise, and cutting of the painter and the parting of the ways will be talked about by many who neither know nor care about the Empire.

...I would say this: when we entered on the Great War, no one foresaw its duration, the magnitude of its operations, the difficulties we should have to encounter. If they had, they would have shrunk with horror from what seemed to be an impossible task. 1924

But the British race proved itself capable of meeting every contingency.... You will never achieve a great object, you will never carry through a great purpose, if you begin with difficulties and begin to consider all the objections to the policy before you accept the principle. If you accept the ideal of a self-contained, united, economic British Empire, with the constituent parts standing shoulder to shoulder, working together, using all its force and might in a concentrated, instead of a sectional manner: if you conceive that, and hold it firmly in your mind, I am certain the difficulties will be overcome, step by step, and that the citizens of the British Empire who fought together in the trenches, like the Canadian Division I saw at Vimy Ridge, next to the British Division, with the New Zealanders not far off, with no tariffs between them, with no distinctions between them, will succeed economically, uniting their forces again. There was no division among the soldiers. ...They fought not to divide, but to unite....

III

Lord Melchett did not escape criticism in this zealous talk of Empire Free Trade. His had been the great voice of Free Trade in the Liberal Government following 1906. A book of essays, bearing his name, could be held up as evidence of his early love. The criticism, but still more, the cause itself, made him call the Conservative party together in the House of Commons, in May of 1927. He said to them: 1927

I have been accused of giving up the Free Trade ideas to which I have, economically, devoted the greatest part of my

1927 political life. On this, I can only say that in this great matter of Empire, there seem to me to be considerations of a much more far-reaching character than those of pure economics.

The refreshing impression that comes from reading Melchett's Empire speeches is that he seldom called upon drums and flags to stage the Empire picture. His use of the story of the war was purely emotional: he never dragged in the sentimentalised figure of Loyalty to aid him in his argument. He believed in loyalty, but he wished to see it strengthened and assured with secure trade agreements. When he talked to the Conservatives at the House, it was an 'economic bond' that he eulogised. 'I do not undervalue the bond of race,' he added, '...the bond...of sentiment, of language, all of which are tremendously powerful, but I am convinced that unless you can tie to them the bond of mutual interest as well, they are more likely to get weaker than stronger in the future.'

From the Houses of Parliament, Mond took his cause into the city. With Lord Hunsdon as his sponsor, he showed the business men a new aspect of his conviction. '...is it merely an economic question?' he asked. 'Is the British Empire merely a question of pounds, shillings and pence?' In case the business men thought so, he told them that a nation that thought like that 'will perish and will deserve to perish'. 'I think people who merely want to translate this into pounds, shillings and pence are not statesmen. I do not think they are people to whom you can safely entrust the destinies of a great imperial race...unless you can show the economic advantage, together with the sentimental personal bond, to the members of the British Empire,

you run the gravest risk, in the course of time, of dis- 1927
integrating this great complex...to be a member of the
British Empire ought to be not merely a privilege and
a responsibility, but also a distinct economic benefit.'

Here was the language of sense. At last, it seemed,
the Empire had a speaker for its cause, who did not rely
upon widow's tears for his emotional effects. Melchett
talked to his listeners across the counter and he made
himself understood. Fortified by his success, he chose
more dangerous ground for his attacks. He stalked
into the enemy's camp, in the Free Trade Hall at
Manchester. Indeed, one might say the enemy's temple.
The big audience of Manchester business men listened
to Melchett's story with growing interest. He drew a
picture of the 'old reign of individualistic anarchy',
with its competition to the bitter end, its system which
'implied that every man was out against his neighbour,
that labour was a purchasable commodity which it was
one's duty to obtain at the cheapest possible price...the
whole idea belonged to the dark ages'. Lord Melchett
then sketched the new idea of social services, housing,
relations between capital and labour, and insurance, all
innovations which imposed 'burdens on industry'.
Then he applied this new state to the Free Trade
arguments.

Can you go on maintaining one part of an economic theory
—a theory of free imports at all costs, regardless of its effect on
British industry, regardless of unemployment, regardless of its
effect on the standard of wages and living, when you have
changed all the other factors that necessarily enter into costs of
production....Does it pay you better really to spend vast sums of
money to maintain your unemployed, in order to import some

1927 kind of product somewhat cheaper than if it were made in this country behind the walls of a tariff? And would it necessarily be dearer? Modern experience shows more and more how far internal competition and more regular and larger units of production do not, in every instance, tend to reduce the costs of products and almost automatically their sale price. It has become almost axiomatic for producers to-day to give their customers some benefit when their own costs of production go down.

I think this whole problem has got to be revisualised entirely from a new angle....I think it important and vital that safeguarding duties should not be allowed to become the cloak of inefficiency or stagnation, that their benefits should accrue to all those engaged in industry, including the workers.

Melchett's desire for tariffs, to protect industry, was clouded with one fear. He was anxious lest the safeguarding tariffs should become mere cloaks for inefficiency and stagnation. He was certain that benefits from tariffs should affect all who were engaged in industry and not merely the shareholders and that the tariffs should not merely be used as a means of extracting more money with less effort. He said:

Over-industrialised Great Britain can only re-establish proper bounds between industry and agriculture by the exchange of manufactured products for agricultural products and raw materials from the great agricultural areas of the world within the Empire—the real law of exchange all the world over, whether within or without any given country. Our huge development of industry and the vast industrial population of these isles have helped towards the development of the dominions and colonies of the Empire. It is to these to which we have to look to create a secure future for the exchange of our industrial products.

The problem is not a new one; it is not an easy one. It has

The Press Lords

become more acute, more urgent and more essential now than 1927
at any other period of our history.

IV

Lord Melchett's powers were those of an industrialist 1929
and a politician. He had established his reputation
in both these spheres. He had invested them with
originality and vigour. His theories about Empire
Economic Unity were intellectually pure and convinc-
ing, when they were expressed in argument.

This was not enough. A new power had arisen in
England: the Press Lords. Without their support and
their amassed trumpeters, an intellectual theory might
live and die an intellectual theory, and never be put
into practice. This power of the Press Lords was
romantic and terrible. It is suggested in a story which
Lord Melchett loved to recall. When Alfred Harms-
worth, father of Lord Northcliffe and Lord Rothermere,
was very old and anticipating death, he buttonholed a
friend and poured his distress upon him. Harmsworth
said that he felt that the end of his life was near. He did
not mind, except that he was frightened of what the
world might do to his young boys. Lord Melchett had
added, when he was told this, 'Humph! He would have
done better if he had worried about what his young
boys would do to the world!'

Lord Northcliffe was already dead, but Lord Rother-
mere and Lord Beaverbrook were ruling Fleet Street.
Without their support, no politician could hope for
success and no public cause could flourish, in the
popular sense, without their patronage. Here was an
interesting and fresh kind of tyranny. People read

1929 *The Times* and the *Morning Post* because they found in their columns what they already believed to be true. The people who read the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* were willing to believe anything new. The older newspapers, like the *Morning Post* and *The Times*, fostered prejudices. The new journals, like the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, were the incubators of ideas and they were also the daily reading matter of millions of people. They gave the mass of people the illusion of being intelligent about affairs, without calling upon them to think for themselves. It rested with the Press Lords to use their tremendous power for good or evil. Whichever way they chose, neither the idea of Empire Free Trade nor any other theory of progress had a chance of success without their support. Lord Beaverbrook was the first sponsor of Empire Free Trade in Fleet Street, forcing it through a barrage of muddle-headed politicians, until it became the law. It was the greatest manifestation of the new power. The story of how the intellectual tangle of political Empire Free Trade was taken from Westminster to Fleet Street by Lord Beaverbrook, to be nurtured and made strong, is proof that Prime Ministers must no longer look only to their conscience or their party for approval. Just as Mr Lloyd George was sent into the wilderness because he did not agree with Fleet Street, so Mr Baldwin was allowed to remain in power, only if he consented to agree. The virtues of this new domination may be mixed. Among people who suffer under new ideas and progress, it is the fashion to talk of 'that terrible Beaverbrook'. They suffer in the same way as a man suffers, when he has a bee down the neck of his shirt.

We all know that the bee is the most virtuous and industrious of all animals and we respect him. But we do not like him to come near to us and disturb us in our siesta. 1929

V

During the weak Socialist administration, that followed the second Conservative defeat of 1929, Lord Beaverbrook burst upon England with his Empire Free Trade campaign. His scheme was more striking than that of Lord Melchett. The difference between them can be discovered in the difference between their labels. Empire Economic Unity suggests a theory. Empire Free Trade sounds more business-like and practical. His cruellest critics have said that Lord Melchett's mind was a rag-bag of brilliant ideas. This is a dramatic exaggeration. But it seems that, just as Sir Harry McGowan was his natural ally in rationalisation, so his ideas of Empire Economic Unity were made fruitful with a man like Lord Beaverbrook to make them tangible and powerful through his newspapers.

Lord Beaverbrook realised that the people were tired of politics and that they demanded statesmanship. The Anglo-Saxons hate their saviours. In times of paralysis, they are willing to accept the imagination of a Welshman, or the character of a Scotsman to revivify them. They will even accept a Jew like Beaconsfield, or they will allow an Irishman like Shaw, to lead them out of the intellectual humbug of the 'nineties. It is one of the meanest traits of the Anglo-Saxon that he will use the talents of other blood and belittle them the while.

Like so many great Englishmen, Lord Beaverbrook

1929 was born out of England. He was damned and criticised and mistrusted. But his talents and his persistence were too much for the bloodless state of Westminster. With Lord Rothermere, he told the Conservative Party that the newspapers would not support them unless they came back into power, revitalised and willing to do something for the country. Lord Beaverbrook forced his medicine down Mr Baldwin's unwilling throat and Empire Free Trade came nearer to reality.

VI

Lord Melchett entered the fight with fervour and alacrity. He gave a Dinner at Lowndes Square and formed the Empire Economic Union, a body of serious business men brought together to investigate the industrial and commercial problems in the policy. Lord Melchett was President, Lord Lloyd was Chairman and Lord Barnby was Deputy Chairman. Mr F. C. Goodenough, Chairman of Barclay's Bank, was Treasurer. The Committee included Mr Amery, Sir Hugo Cunliffe-Owen, Sir Harry Goschen, Sir Robert Hatfield, Sir Hugo Hirst, Sir Felix Pole and Lord Melchett's son.

Melchett at once got into touch with Lord Beaverbrook and on the basis of their common ideal, a lively friendship grew up between them. Melchett enrolled himself as an Empire Crusader, and in return, Lord Beaverbrook said that he was convinced that Melchett could 'do more on the platform than any other man for his cause'.

In January of 1930, Lord Melchett went to South Africa to speak upon Empire Economic Unity. There

were other interests—Zionism, business and health. 1929
The South Africans received him coldly. The Prime Minister of Australia had just said that there was not 'the least prospect of securing Australia's sanction to the scheme'. The *Ons Vaderland* quoted Mr Scullin to support their attack upon Lord Melchett and his plan, and they added that the policy of Australia also applied to South Africa 'in equal measure'. The article continued, 'Lord Melchett seems to labour under the wrong impression.... This whole idea of Empire Trade seems to be based on the erroneous supposition that Great Britain should be considered the Mother country and the Dominions as subordinate territory'.

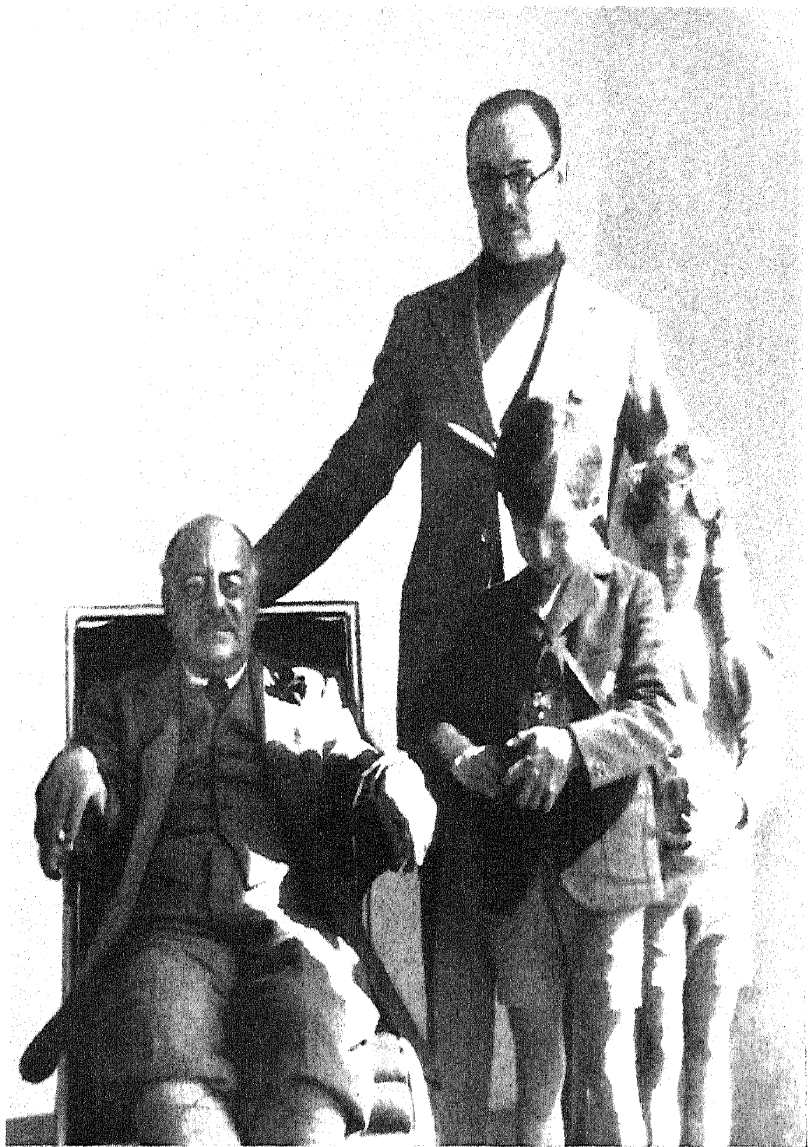
This was the stuff to arouse the fighter in Melchett. His speeches rang with all the gusto of his early attacks upon Socialism. The South Africans like energy and they admire it. In their politics, they like muscles more than theories.

'...when you come to a country like this', said Lord Melchett, 'and hold out to people the prospect of what I consider the greatest business partnership in the world, you have the greatest difficulty in convincing them that you have not come to plunder them. They immediately seem to stiffen their backs, sew up their pockets with wire, and are not convinced that you have not come to exploit this country for the British manufacturer. That is almost a cave man's idea of Industry and Trade, to-day.

'It reminds me of the political controversies of my youth, in which I took a considerable part, and which to-day are as extinct as the dodo. That is not what we are after. That is not what is at the bottom of the movement. If that was all, it would scarcely be worth my while, on a hot day, asking you to listen to me on this subject.'

1929 Lord Melchett returned to England to find Lord Beaverbrook in the midst of his Empire Free Trade campaign. He had intimidated Mr Baldwin. His trumpets may have been a little loud in tone, but they were loud enough and true enough to make Mr Baldwin obedient and to force Empire Free Trade upon the country. A few days after his arrival from Africa, Lord Melchett was asked to be the guest of the Delegates to the Congress of the British Empire Chambers of Commerce, at a Luncheon at the Mansion House. This was one of the last great public compliments paid to Lord Melchett. In his address he wrote,

...The writing is on the wall....I have seen it coming; I have spoken about it now for some years. Many people may have thought I was speaking in a dream, but I have seen it coming as clearly as the day follows the night. The great American economic unit which exists to-day will be followed by a European economic unit in no too distant time, and the great plan M. Briand launched the other day was the first official step in that direction; but negotiations and work of a very important kind has been going on for years among the business men of Europe. When I read his great scheme—and, after all, he is one of the oldest and most distinguished statesmen of our time, and is speaking as a Minister of State and addressing his communications to Governments, not to individuals—I thought well, this man has courage; this man has vision. He thinks it possible to bind together in some form and shape the warring elements of Europe, of different races, different languages and different religions, with age-long traditions of hatred and warfare between them. Yet we, gentlemen, we who are of the same kith and kin, with the same ideals and the same language, we who fought for four years in the trenches of France and Flanders side by side, without a tariff between us, without anything to separate us—we sit and boggle at the idea of uniting ourselves!



LORD MELCHETT, HIS SON AND HIS GRANDSONS.

Incredible! What would M. Briand say if he were standing here at this table? Would he not say, 'You may think me a lunatic; but if I had your job I should think it too easy to turn my hand to'.

VII

The last chapters of his biography will show that, during this time, Lord Melchett was also engaged upon his work for Palestine: the return of the Jews to the land, under the patronage of the Zionist movement. Just as Lord Melchett's belated Jewish interests stirred new motives within him, so his other interests were affected by his zeal. He thought and spoke in new dimensions. His pure economics glowed with a new idealism. He talked of the Empire with vision as well as common sense. In the later speeches he drew pictures of other Empires. He awakened a picture of Seville, with its seventeenth-century building in which the records of the old Spanish Empire were kept: dusty records of an Empire that dwindled and died. He recalled Hadrian's villa and the monuments of Rome: still more records of the dust to which Empires had fallen. He recalled Macaulay's picture of the New Zealander watching the ruins of St Paul's and begged his listeners to realise that this would never be true if Great Britain built her Empire on less material purposes than Rome and Spain. His speeches were such a spur to the cause that Lord Beaverbrook wrote to him on one occasion, 'I am writing to congratulate you most warmly on what I believe to have been the most brilliant speech yet made on Empire Free Trade'.

Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Melchett came closer together and enjoyed the intimacy of Christian names.

1930 They shared exasperation over the Socialist administration and the equally futile opposition put up by Mr Baldwin. As a converted Conservative, Melchett was obliged to follow a leader in whom he but half-heartedly believed. He once said of his change from Mr Lloyd George's methods to those of Mr Baldwin, 'It is like going to stay with the Bramwell Booths after staying with the Borgias'. He shared this irritation with Lord Beaverbrook and they exchanged hearty letters of plans and complaint.

Lord Beaverbrook was not relaxing from his campaign. Empire Free Trade was the one solution possible for the country's muddle. He did not wish, he said, to 'get at cross purposes with Neville Chamberlain'. There was much about him that reminded him of Bonar Law. But he would not accept any of Mr Baldwin's attempts at compromise and he thought it a 'great mistake', he wrote, to 'let the fellow take only one tablespoonful of castor oil, when at least two are required'. He added, a little gloomily, in his letter to Melchett, that he did not think that 'even two table-spoonfuls will do much good'.

It was about this time that Lord Beaverbrook made his greatest gesture. If Mr Baldwin would not throw himself heart and soul into the Empire Free Trade campaign, then the second spoonful of oil must be administered. Lord Beaverbrook would create a new party, vigorous enough to dig the grave of the sleepy Tories, if they would not wake up and support him. Thus it was that Admiral Taylor became the Empire Candidate for South Paddington, in the by-election at the end of 1930.

Admiral Taylor was elected and, intimidated by 1930 such methods and such determination, Mr Baldwin yielded and accepted the Beaverbrook policy without compromise.

Lord Melchett was disturbed by such ruthlessness. He begged Lord Beaverbrook not to 'harass' Mr Baldwin. He thought such methods would make the 'plain man in the street' doubt the *bona fides* of the movement. 'I for one', wrote Lord Melchett in his letter of October 22nd, 'would not lend myself to any such tactics.'

'I think you have a very big opportunity,' continued Melchett, 'having scored the greatest personal triumph of anyone I know of in all my political life. The mere fact that Baldwin addressed his letter to you personally is in reality complete surrender.'

Lord Beaverbrook was adamant. 'He would not have clutched at me if he had not been a drowning man', he wrote of Mr Baldwin. 'If he thinks I am going to bolster him up, then he is greatly mistaken', he continued. This letter was written on October 23rd. Admiral Taylor was not yet elected and Mr Baldwin was not yet obedient. The Conservatives had been so violent in their hatred of the Beaverbrook policy that they laughed at the late Edward Marjoribanks when he seconded an Empire Free Trade motion in the House.

Distressed by Lord Beaverbrook's determination to force Mr Baldwin or to form a new party, Lord Melchett remained quiet for a little time. By this time he was upon his death bed, at Lowndes Square. His letters had begun many times with complaints over his 'wretched phlebitis' and with expressions of his hope that 'the

1930 long period of tedious depression' would soon be over.

In November, a little more than a month before he died, Lord Melchett sent another letter to Lord Beaverbrook, to congratulate him upon his 'great triumph' at South Paddington, 'and to complain again of the Socialist Administration. ...we must get this Government out of office as they are an imperial and national danger, scarcely understood by the ordinary person', he wrote. '...whatever governments may want to do, the people of England will insist on Empire Economic Unity and, I hope, in a much broader spirit ultimately, as you and I have conceived it, for we have always had a bigger vision than merely tinkering around with some preferences. As soon as I am really fit, I want to write something on my own views, committing nobody....'

But he admitted that his strength was being exhausted and that the 'boredom of bed becomes almost intolerable'. From his bed, Melchett watched the last manoeuvres of the campaign. 'Austen Chamberlain made the best speech I have seen for some time at Cardiff', he wrote on December the First. '...he came out in a very manly and straightforward way on the subject...our best help is the stupidity and maladroitness of our opponents.'

As December drew on to the end, and to his death, Melchett wrote his last letters. They showed a single-minded belief in Empire Free Trade and a mocking despair over the intellectual capacity of Westminster. He died in the thick of the battle, before he could enjoy the dramatic election which sent the National Government to the House and before he could enjoy the

The Ottawa Conference

prominence given to his own ideas in the election 1930 speeches. He died before Mr MacDonald became Prime Minister of the National Government. The intense Pacifist of the war, the man whom the seamen had refused to take upon a mission to Russia because of his revolutionary ideas, was to become the King's Prime Minister and the leader of the country. Even Mr MacDonald was to say, on the eve of the Ottawa Conference, that his Government wished to see the 'development of Imperial trade on the freest possible lines'.

What Lord Melchett would have said had he lived to see the lame way in which Mr MacDonald's delegates stumbled along 'the freest possible lines' is what is so often described as 'another story'.

Another delight Lord Melchett was to miss was the spectacle of his old enemy, Lord Snowden, denouncing Socialism in the House of Lords. In 1923, Melchett had thrashed him for his attack upon Capitalism. In 1932, Lord Snowden was to stand in the Second Chamber and echo the very arguments with which Melchett had flayed him. Perhaps Lord Melchett would only have sunk to darker depths of pessimism over the state of man. He had said that the danger with Socialists was that they would develop a sense of honour and become hidebound Tories. Had he lived, he would have seen Lord Snowden prove his words to be true.

CHAPTER XXXIII

I

1928-1930 **I**N his reminiscences, published a few months ago, Sir Herbert Maxwell wrote:

If fair natural abilities are to be rightly exercised and worthily applied, they must be early, definitely and resolutely concentrated upon a single purpose.

If this is true, the curious sense of defeat which hangs over Lord Melchett's life is explained. He never pursued a single purpose 'definitely and resolutely'. Indeed, his biographer has often found himself bewildered in casting material aside: evidence of the diversity of Melchett's interests and enthusiasms. A sense of failure comes upon the writer: as if, in contemplating the conglomeration of material, he has not succeeded in lifting the man himself out of the tangle of his affairs. The great, brave figure, awakening more fear than affection, blundering sometime because of his own eagerness, is still lost, it seems, in a mist of interests. Alfred Mond is an elusive figure to the biographer. He impressed so many men in so many different ways. Some have vowed that his love for Palestine was a phase: others have said that it was the one, deep emotion of his life. Peers have told the author that when Melchett spoke in the House of Lords, he held their attention so that they were blind to the passing of time. Others have said that when he stood up, they stood up too, but only to walk out of the House. He was loved and he

was hated; he was scorned and he was respected. But 1928-1930
he was never overlooked.

One turns to a story of the time when Lord Melchett accepted his peerage to dig still more deeply into the core of him. The popular and easy verdict was that he wished for the glory of being a peer. There is nothing an English aristocrat hates so much as to feel that he has earned his title. He likes to know that, far away in the dimness, an ancestor worked for his peerage. For himself, it is enough to know that anything but his own merits have gained him his eminence. Melchett had earned his peerage. If that is an offence, then he was the climber he was said to be. In part, he *did* wish to be a peer. It bestowed certain privileges upon his family and upon his descendants and he was not blind to those advantages. He confessed them to an intimate friend. Ninety per cent. of the members of the House of Lords can claim ancestors who went through the same sensation. But there were other motives behind Melchett's ambition. There was also a desire for rest. His increasing industrial interests left little time for fighting elections. (He had fought five in six years.) Melchett did not wish to retire from politics. The one way in which he could serve both politics and industry and save himself the strain of elections was from a seat in the Second Chamber.

In the work which he had taken upon himself, Industry and Politics, Alfred Mond pursued what was not entirely true to himself. At heart, he was a poet. It may have been no more than a poet of Swinburne's school. But the langour of a poet's existence was upon him, until he married. Lady Melchett was the spur of

1928-1930 his public achievement. She was ambitious: she was single minded in her purpose, keeping her husband's energies upon a single line, stimulating them when they flagged, providing the corrective which he needed when he turned his eyes back with longing, to the lotus eaters. In an earlier phrase, the author has confessed his bewilderment in trying to probe to the core of Melchett's motives. There was one remark which he made which helps us in our search.

The trouble is that I have never been cunning enough, in a crisis, to use it for my own personal advancement. I have loved a crisis or a problem for its own sake. A man cannot serve his country and serve his own eminence with equal sincerity.

No author can write a good biography unless he approaches his subject with affection as well as interest. There is not one great biography in English which has not grown out of the affection of the writer for the object of his story. Lockart's life of Scott, Boswell's Johnson, Trevelyan's life of Macaulay and the life of Darwin by his son, are shining examples which spring to mind.

The present biographer has passed from the calm state of interest, with which he began this work, to a deep affection for his subject: an affection which is all the more interesting because he never even saw Lord Melchett. Nor had he read anything about him, until he began to write this book. It is an affection which has grown out of letters and papers. It is an affection which is coloured with compassion, for Lord Melchett's private letters show that, behind all the grimness of his address, there was a wistful loneliness in which he never

enjoyed the full sensations of success. Once he stopped a friend in London and said: 'Do you know that there is not one house, excepting my own, in London, to which I can go on the spur of the moment and feel that there is a hostess who wants to see me'. This was a sad and terrible confession from a man who had contributed so liberally to the thought and the welfare of his country. 1928-1930

The happiest picture of Lord Melchett is to be found in the records of his life at Melchet Court, his home in Hampshire. Here, in his garden, sometimes he allowed himself to relax from the pressure of his public life. The old spirit awakened in him. A boyish sense of fun stirred again, when the files and papers were laid aside. Once it reached delicious heights. He went up to London to a circus party. The amusements included a game of Aunt Sally. He played Aunt Sally for an hour and a half and forgot all about the party. He went on and on, and he did not appear in the drawing-room until the last guests were leaving. There had been prizes for the game and he appeared with sixteen strings of beads around his neck. 'Don't scold me,' he pleaded, 'I have enjoyed myself immensely.'

Melchet Court was an impressive and dignified house, filled with beautiful things. It was in the forming of this collection that Alfred Mond expressed the taste and knowledge he had inherited from his father and mother. The house was big, and its beauty was impersonal. One wandered through its rooms, never seeing a meretricious object, never seeing any but good pictures, distinguished furniture and amazing flowers. Here politicians, industrialists, artists, botanists

1928-1930 and Zionists came to see him. They saw different facets of his changing nature and interests. Sometimes he would seem to be in love with the idea of power. There were frequent suggestions that he longed to rule Palestine. Once there was a proposal that he should be High Commissioner. Even those cynics who pooh-pooh his late passion for Zionism, admit that he would have liked the sensation of power and dominion that would have come to him, if he had completed his fortune and transferred it to Palestine. Sometimes he was called 'The King of the Jews' by the ardent Zionists in the Valley of Sharon. Often, it seems, his imagination played with the thought of power, far beyond the limits of the British House of Commons or the Second Chamber.

Then this side of him would fade away. Another facet, as big and true, would catch the light. He would walk over the house with a guest who had knowledge and taste. The Greek marbles would possess him. He would stroke the flanks of one of them with his hand and tell a story. It would be a story of Rome, awakening the old dreams of Hadrian's Villa and the Spanish Steps. He would show his friend the beautiful pictures which now hang in the National Gallery. They shone, like gems, upon the walls of his study. Or there would be a rare bronze, a Renaissance box, a second folio of Shakespeare, a first edition of Boswell. In such an hour, Mond was truly a poet. All arrogance, all hardness left him. All desire for power. He became the epitome of charm.

He would meander in his garden or he would walk with his dogs out into the woods. Again the facet

changed. He loved the country and his park: his gardens 1928-1930
were continually changing their form and colour under
his hand.

In the evening, after dinner, he became still another person. Sitting in the loggia, with a group of young people about him, he would rise to the heights of prophecy. The awe of a Jewish Patriarch gathered about him. What he said would afterwards creep into a Cabinet Memorandum, into a speech or an article for a newspaper. When he sat thus, thinking aloud, groping down the arcades of new thought, he was a grand conversationalist. As early as 1916, he evolved a great plan by which bankers and industrialists should work hand in hand, adding his anger that 'English bankers would consider it quite unsound banking to lock up the money of their depositors in industrial development or new enterprises'.

Another time he spoke of Reparations. In 1921, when the question of Reparations was still nebulous and when we still saw Germany's debt in terms of gold, he urged that we should accept manufactured equipment for the electrification of the country.

One evening, he pressed the disadvantages of the gold standard upon his guests. The thread of his ideas led to a speech in the House of Commons a few days afterwards. He said:

You cannot watertight the question of your financial policy from that of your industrial policy. You cannot crucify Great Britain on the cross of the gold standard and expect trade and commerce to develop as freely as if they were unfettered. You cannot restrict credit and then wonder that you have no development in trade and why you have unemployment. You

1928-1930 cannot restrict currency and wonder why your people cannot purchase. These things must march hand in hand, and the important resolution which was passed at the Genoa conference in 1922 by all the leading financial authorities of the country ought to be taken up and carried out.¹

Melchett was often far seeing and he suffered the opprobrium of his colleagues because of the force with which he spoke. In 1926, he wrote :

It is terrible to have such a weak and divided Government. Our trouble comes largely from Churchill's idiotic gold standard.

Six years were to pass before the then Chancellor of the Exchequer came to agree with him. It was not until April of 1932 that Mr Winston Churchill said that

Gold was a measure...that had played the traitor to us. When he was moved by many arguments and forces in 1925 to return to the gold standard he was assured by the highest experts that we were anchoring ourselves to reality and to stability, and he accepted their advice. He took with his colleagues of other days all the blame and burden of having accepted their advice.²

In later years, when Lord Melchett left the House of Commons and turned from its sturdier fight and talk, he settled into the quieter atmosphere of the House of Lords a little restlessly. Once or twice, he wielded real power in the Second Chamber. The Coal Mines Act of 1929 awakened the old fighter in him. The defeat of the Socialist Government and the Conservatives over this bill was largely due to the vigour with which he

¹ Hansard, April 25, 1928, column 942.

² *The Times*, April 22, 1932.

Kindness

gathered the Independent Conservative Peers around him, and it was with his amendment that the bill went back to the Commons, to be passed. 1928-1930

II

One story emerges from the author's notes to give a new and pleasant picture of Lord Melchett. It was given to him by Major-General J. B. Seely, who was Colonial Secretary at the time of the incident. General Seely said:

There was a native prince in South Africa who was to be tried for his life for rebellion. I was Colonial Secretary at the time. There was no arrangement made for the proper defence of this man. I at once cabled to the Government of the Orange Free State telling them that I thought they ought to put up the money for his defence. They replied refusing to do so. I consulted the permanent officials of the Colonial Office, and they informed me that I had no power to take money from the Colonial Office to provide for the man's defence. I went over to the House of Commons, very much distressed, with the telegram from the Orange Free State in my hand. One of the first men I met was Alfred Mond. I went up and told him the story and showed him the telegram. We were in the 'Aye' Lobby, and he walked over to the window, where there was more light, and read the telegram through, in his characteristic way, holding it up close to his face. He turned to me and said: 'My dear Jack, I will give you £500 to help him'. I said: 'That is very generous indeed, Alfred, but I cannot accept it'. He replied: 'Not at all: that is just one of the things that a man who has a little spare cash can sometimes do, to see justice done, when there is no provision because of the red tape in the world. It is only at a time like this that one feels it to be a privilege and a trust to have money. It will give me real pleasure to do it'.

III

1930 Some years before his death, Lord Melchett had consulted a doctor who had told him that probably he would not live very long. He came back to England, kept his miserable secret from his family, and threw his energies into his work. Indeed, he seems to have turned his back upon the grim sentence, for he still planned his life in the terms of healthy old age. His ambition to retire to Palestine, the story of which is told in a later chapter, seems to be incongruous in a man who expected death.

His speeches still achieved broad and ambitious phrases, until one day in New York, when he spoke to the Bond Club. He had already unknowingly contracted the illness which was to kill him before the end of the year. A humble but prophetic note runs through the whole speech. The President had introduced him with a compliment. Lord Melchett, he said, was not a Captain of Industry. He was a Field Marshal. Melchett rose to reply and somebody who knew him well says that his manner, from the beginning, suggested some change, some deeper realisation of what lay before him. Of all his speeches this, his last, was the most touching, the most humorous and the most humane. At that time, we were peering over the edge of the abyss towards which we had been marching, from the end of the war. For the first time, people were talking loudly of the crash of civilisation. Melchett, too, peered over the abyss, at the end of his career, and he talked to the American business men with sincerity and candour.

‘I regret that I am getting older,’ he said, ‘for I think the

world is getting more interesting every day. So many interesting things are going to happen that I am afraid I shall never see....' 1930

One reads through the long speech, choosing odd paragraphs which give a clear picture of his philosophy in economics at the time.

I always see people employing economists to advise them what to do. Thinking over it the other day, I thought we were all wrong. I thought what we should employ are psychologists. The world to-day is not governed by economists, anyway. It is governed by psychology, and, what is more dangerous, mob psychology of a somewhat abstract and ignorant character. And that explains, I think, a good many of what I might call economic paradoxes which might be explained when we analyse them economically.

And again, we are mostly governed by sentiment, and sentiment varies in an extraordinary way. It puzzles us sometimes, because at one time I understand you were very sad because you had too much wheat and then you were sad because you had too little. It seems to be difficult to understand how both can be true. God is still puzzling what America wants him to do.

When I was a young man and still believed in economics, we were always told that if you only reduced prices, consumption would grow, and therefore a reduction of prices would mean larger consumption.

I very much doubt whether that is altogether true to-day, in large and basic food products and possibly other things... I think it is due to the fact that the standard of living in the greater part of this country and certainly the greater part of Europe has risen to such an extent to-day that ninety per cent., at any rate, of the population, if not more, can buy all the bread they want, and won't eat any more bread if it becomes cheaper, because they cannot eat any more. A reduction in the price will not increase consumption, it will merely damage the

1930 producer. . . . I am not sure that every commodity to-day has not got some kind of basic value below which consumption is not necessarily increased at all. If that is so and we could fix those basic values, we might enormously assist in stabilising and getting a clearer picture of the whole of the economic position. Many a man, after an operation, feels very bobbish for a day or two, but two or three months afterwards feels his nervous system all knocked to pieces. It is the length of that period, the determination of that, I think, which is really a great deal of our difficulty at the present time. As only one illustration let me just point out one curious phenomenon, which is troubling all of us all over the world. It hit you rather late, and therefore you are a little more surprised about it. That is the question of unemployment. We have been struggling with that question for a great many years in Great Britain; in fact, we have struggled with it so long that we got quite used to it; except in the newspapers, people don't worry very much about it. But it is not merely an English phenomenon. You will find it in other countries. You find it in Germany, you find it very much over here. Now, the very process of improvement in technique, in which we have been indulging for years, has been the displacement of labour by machinery. We have been very rapidly displacing men by improved machinery. And as long as you have enough new work for those men to be absorbed in new enterprises, or further enterprises, you do not feel this phenomenon is taking place. But, of course, as soon as that ceases, and instead of being on a rising curve, you are on a flat or downward curve, you suddenly have the phenomenon of several million people for whom you have no jobs. That has been created by the very improvements you have been effecting. And you have to keep them somehow or other. I don't advise you how to keep them. There is only one bit of advice I can give you: for God's sake, don't copy what we have been doing. It would be a most fatal thing, to my mind, if you did.

I was in a very interesting museum in Toronto the other day,

and I saw a wonderful animal. It was a fossil of a vegetable-eating dinosaur, which apparently flew. It was nearly as high as the Chrysler Building. At any rate, I think it stood 120 feet from the ground. It was a terrible looking animal, and you wondered how it had ever lived. And you wondered why it disappeared. But apparently it ruled the world of its time, something like ten million years ago. 1930

Well, gentlemen, our whole modern civilization, as we know it, is scarcely more than 120 years old, and therefore we are not at the end, we are at the beginning, of where we are going to.

In industry, in thought, in every form of existence, life gets more fascinating as it proceeds. The human being has begun to emancipate himself more and more. I think we want to strip some of our old ideas, and at last to get in the position we have not been in now for over a century, and that is that we are not slaves of the machine, but we are its master; that the office is not for us to work in, but to provide a living. When I say 'a living', I mean something more than going to an office. That machinery is there to provide us with leisure and not to give us more work; that transportation is there to give us more time, and not less.

I think when we have mastered these difficulties, and I think we shall, then I think we shall be nearer than we have ever been to the days which the human race has always dreamed about, but never yet achieved, the golden age which many think was in the past, but which I am positively convinced is in the future.

CHAPTER XXXIV

I

Interlude **F**OR the greater part of the last century, there lived in the Polish village of Moteyh, a poor but industrious Jewish family named Weizmann. The father was engaged in business and his sons were at school. The tradition of Jewish persecution had made them recluse and sad. The village was dismal under the weight of poverty: the great wastes of the province of Pinsk separated it from the more prosperous world outside. The eldest of the Weizmann sons was named Chaim. His pale, serious face, was haunted by mysteries beyond the pinched life of his village. Even when he was a little boy, no more than ten years of age, his imagination made strange journeys. It was unseemly that a Jewish child should play. Christian children might part their red lips in laughter: a Hebrew boy should read the law with his bloodless lips and, sitting upon the end of the bench on the Sabbath morning, hold the precious scrolls, while the sombre elders droned on through the book of Moses.

Chaim Weizmann was such a boy. Contemplation had placed a veil over his eyes. They peered into the present with only half understanding. Perhaps a spirit dwelling among Jerusalem's stones of agony had flown to him at his birth and had touched his eyes. He seemed to have the gift of prophecy, and, before he was ten years old, he knew the history of his people; he knew the long narrative of suffering, the long cry of pain

which had descended from generation to generation, *Interlude* making the Jews the pariahs of the earth.

There came a time when Chaim Weizmann had learned all he could from the village teacher. So he was sent to the bigger town of Pinsk, to delve more deeply into the story of his people. The ringlets upon his head grew longer. His eyes were set in an almost transparent olive face and when they looked up from their book, they were so intense and true that they made mean men and liars turn away from their scrutiny, in shame.

From his new school, the boy Chaim wrote an astonishing letter to his old teacher in the village. He was still a little boy, twelve years old. He said that he would devote his life to the creation of a home for his people and that he believed that England was the country which would be chosen to aid the Jews.

II

When he was fifty years of age, Chaim Weizmann had gone far beyond the confines of his village: he had already become a blessing and an inspiration to the hills and valleys of Palestine.

He had come to power as a Zionist by strange ways. In Berlin and in Manchester he had worked as a clever chemist: so clever that when the war came, he was invited to help the Admiralty in a crisis. Mr Lloyd George has told the story.

In the Ministry of Munitions, I was confronted with one of the most serious crises with which I was ever beset... As I marched from gun to gun, from shell to shell, I suddenly found that we had not got one of the great motive powers

Interlude to make cordite-wood alcohol. I turned to Dr Weizmann. Alcohol had to be made out of wood, and he trained little animals—I don't know through how many generations—to eat sugar, and the alcohol was made out of maize, and then there was plenty of 'corn in Egypt', and we were saved. I felt a deep debt of gratitude, and so did all the Allies, to the brilliant scientific genius of Dr Weizmann. When we talked to him and asked him, 'What can we do for you in the way of any honour?' he replied, 'All I care for is an opportunity to do something for my people'.

Out of this had grown the Balfour Declaration. Slowly, the valleys of Sharon and Jezreel were awakened from their Moslem lethargy. England was to nurse the Jews in their home coming. Pale and wizened women from the shadows of Cracow came with their sons: children whose parents had been massacred by their Polish neighbours, Jewish fathers who had already prospered in New York, came in hundreds. Mr Balfour had said that the British Government 'viewed with favour' the establishment of a National Home for them. The words may have seemed English and careful. But passion could not be confined by a phrase. Young Jews who had thrown their books aside in German Universities, sacrificed the advantages of learning and went back to the land: their own land. They straightened their brown backs. The pallor was burned out of their cheeks by the sun of Israel. They were part of the radiance of the refreshed country. They lifted their hands towards the sun which nourished their crops: their feet were firmly planted upon their own earth.

Chaim Weizmann had played a great part in this work of bringing the Zionists back to Palestine. He had raised millions of pounds among the Jews of the world.

Ever since the Middle Ages, Jewish scholars had been returning to Jerusalem to the religious schools. But in 1880, a new spirit had come into Jerusalem, and this spirit culminated in the teachings of Herzl, the journalist, who was inspired by the injustice of the Dreyfus case. He taught the Jews that they must till the land as well as learn the law, if ever they were to possess Zion again. The settlers had dribbled into the country under Herzl. Now, with Balfour's blessing and Weizmann's zeal, they were pouring back to their National home. The acceptable year of the Lord was coming to the oppressed people. The once miserable Jews of Central Europe felt the fresh breezes of the Judaeen hills upon their faces. They squeezed the golden oranges they had grown themselves, to give juice to the brown, laughing Jewish babies, born in the brave settlements. Truly they were to receive beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning—the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The words of Isaiah were blossoming:

And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

III

One day, early in 1921, Chaim Weizmann went to speak to Alfred Mond in London. He was trying to awaken English Jews to an interest in Zionism and there was a faint hope that two generations of apathy had not drained all the Jewish sympathies out of Mond. It was true that Sir Alfred had been encouraging when they first met, a little time before. But Weizmann remembered also that Mond had married a Christian,

1921 that his father was not an orthodox Jew and that his children were married and confirmed in the Christian faith. This being so, his task might not be easy. True, in April of 1917, Sir Alfred had addressed a meeting at the Queen's Hall, in protest against the persecution of Jews in Russia. He had spoken then, for the first time in his life, 'in their name', and a newspaper said that he 'trembled with passion' as he declared his feeling. But it was true also that two generations in England and twenty years of Industry and Politics had, it seemed, tied Alfred Mond's family irrevocably to the English story. His friends were Christians and he knew little of the Jewish faith. Chaim Weizmann would have to probe very deep, one hundred and twenty years back, as far back as the village near Cassel—as far back as Moritz Mond's prayer beside his father's coffin, at the end of the eighteenth century, before he could awaken whatever there was of the Jew still slumbering in Mond's being.

Weizmann painted his picture. At the far end of the Mediterranean was the once desolate and sad country in which religious creeds were born: the impoverished country from which Jews and Moslems and Christians had all taken the inspiration of their faiths. Through two thousand years of suffering, the scattered Jews of Europe had dreamed of their return to Palestine. Balfour, an Englishman, had given them their first light. Now they were coming back, traversing land and sea, to press their mouths against the wailing wall: the last remnant of their temple. But also to till the earth and make their homes there. Weizmann reminded Alfred Mond of the benevolence of England. It was right and inevitable, he said, that prosperous Jews, assimilated into

facing p. 359.

Since the completion of the printing of this book the author has been informed of the following facts by Mr. Simon Marks—at the time of the incident recounted, Hon. Secretary of the Zionist Organisation and now Chairman of the Palestine Foundation Fund for Great Britain and Ireland.

On November 17th, 1917, Lord Melchett sent a letter to a Zionist meeting in Swansea (which he then represented in Parliament), which was afterwards published in the Press, in which he said :—

“ I very much regret it is impossible for me to attend the meeting you are about to hold at this important turning-point of the Zionist cause. Hopes long deferred, and in fact hitherto looked upon as an idle dream, seem now nearer realisation than ever before.

“ The development in recent years of the Jewish colonies in Palestine, whose success under unfavourable and depressing conditions has been phenomenal, has always deeply impressed me and given assurance of the success of the future. There are some who seem to think that the establishment of a national home in Palestine will prejudice Jews in the eyes of their fellow citizens in the British Empire. I do not share, and have never shared, those views. In my opinion, quite the reverse will be the case. The dignity and importance of our whole race will be enhanced by the existence of a national home where those of our people who have been compelled to live under less favourable conditions than we enjoy will be able to establish themselves on the soil of their ancestors.”

This letter was quoted in a memorandum to the British Government which set out to disprove the assertions of certain sections of British Jewry, who had cited Lord Melchett as a Member of the British Government who was opposed to the principles involved in the Balfour Declaration. Mr. Marks later arranged an interview between Dr. Weizmann and Lord Melchett, at which, to use his own words :—

“ They at once fully understood each other, discussing these questions upon the same plane and in the same terms, and from there drifted to a discussion of chemistry and scientific problems. It was the beginning of a deep personal friendship.”

English life, should also stand behind Balfour and the British Government. Weizmann talked in terms which were strange to Mond. He listened patiently. He was not a religious man: indeed, it can be said that his approach to life had been largely scientific and intellectual. He had often suspected passion and he had thrown the cold water of facts upon emotion. Never once, in any letter or speech, had he mentioned a Divine Power or a spiritual purpose in life. How then was he to understand this violent, pale man, whose eyes burned in front of him? Perhaps it was that Weizmann probed deep enough, for Lord Melchett consented to go and see Palestine. But he admitted, in commenting upon his decision later, 'I was ready to believe that the revival of Palestine was not capable of solution and the plan undesirable'.

IV

A touch of duty was added to Alfred Mond's first visit to Palestine. After seeing Dr Weizmann, he met other Zionists and he was appointed President of the Economic Board, which was formed to help the settlement of the Jews. When Lord Melchett arrived in Jerusalem, he stayed with Sir Herbert Samuel at Government House, and from there he set out upon short journeys to see the country. The battle between so many forces excited him to creative ideas. The great tide of Arabs, which could awaken and sweep from the desert towards the sea: the trained British officials, wrestling with a new and curious kind of colonisation for which neither their army training nor their Colonial Office had equipped them. The new, young Jews,

1921 struggling towards physical strength and racial emancipation; the bent, orthodox Jews, shambling up and down the noisy bazaars, haunted and passive, with no fight in them at all. The first time that Melchett went down through the old city to the wailing wall, he was appalled. He saw the pale old Jews, with their long purple velvet cloaks, swaying through the prayers: the wizened and fanatical women, huddled at the foot of the wall, touching it with their gnarled brown fingers, adoration and mysticism pouring out of their hands, and from their lips, as they bent forward to kiss the stone. Mond was revolted. 'My God, I should like to blow it up. It is terrible! It is terrible! It is the symbol of their humiliation and of the death of their pride. It is not in this way that they will build a nation or a people. In this is only further destruction: not escape.'

Then he went to Judaea, Samaria and Galilee.

For two weeks he travelled over the country. The Jews, anxious for England's friendship, still struggling to hold their land and their lives against the Arab discontent, welcomed him with naïve curiosity. At first they did not believe in him. The English Jews had been so lethargic up to this time. But Mond's zeal convinced them. For them, coming from dark corners of Europe, he was an English Jew, a Jew from the country whose kindness had always refreshed them when they despaired for their existence in Poland or Russia or Germany; the country which had exalted Disraeli: the country which had put a Jew upon the Viceregal throne of India. For the diligent settler, working in the Jewish colonies, Alfred Mond came to be almost as refreshing

and inspiring as the Balfour Declaration had been. 1921
Once convinced of his sincerity, they asked and expected much of him.

Nobody could know the proportions and passions of Zionism without going to Palestine. The Jews, with centuries of business shrewdness to their credit, bred in a cautious pattern, seemed to have lost all their astuteness and to have remembered only what they felt, when they touched the coast of Palestine. They were willing to lose half their capital for their ideal: they were willing to till the earth for years without profit and to throw away their scholarship and comforts. All for Zion! They approached the new era with as much fanaticism as their forbears might have approached the wailing wall. The old Jews sought the past in the wailing wall. The new Jews sought the future in the soil. With the new Jews, Lord Melchett had much in common. He understood energy and action. If he recoiled from the wailing wall, he turned with equal spontaneity to the Jewish farmers. In their hands lay the escape from the heritage of suppression and the heritage of character, which had been warped and hurt by the pales of the European ghettos. When twenty young Jews rode out to meet him, upon white horses, the fine brown dust rising about the hoofs of their beasts like a tide, the sun burning down upon their smiling faces, Lord Melchett leaned forward in his car. 'This is something new. . . . I understand *them*. See! (He clutched his daughter's arm) Jews riding, look at their faces!' Within three days his being had changed. He no longer talked of 'You Zionists', as if their cause were remote from him. He said, talking of his journey

1921 and of its 'deep and great emotion', 'it is madness and profanation to think that there exists anybody in the whole world who could prevent *us* from carrying out *our* ideal. . . . *My* hands are not weak and *I* will allow no Jew in the world to have weak hands. . . .'

A few days afterwards, he came to the Sea of Galilee. Lord Melchett said that the grim Judaeian hills explained the spirit of the old prophets, just as the calm and pastoral beauty of Galilee explained the teaching of Jesus, who lived and walked and preached there. In this moment of coming to Galilee, Melchett came also to the calm state in which he could adjust his impressions and carve his convictions. He had travelled from settlement to settlement, watching the young Jews planting and tending their orange trees, watching the women with their babies, all belonging to the first fine energy of an emancipated people. Lying beneath the eucalyptus trees at Migdal, near the place where Mary Magdalene was born, Mond wove what was perhaps his first purely spiritual love. This lonely man, now well established in English life, risen from boyhood to power by energy, perseverance, talent, and a certain hard quality which seemed to make arrows glance off him without harming him: this almost egotistical, certainly ruthless industrialist and politician, who had never admitted any divine power in anything he wrote or said, suddenly became a passionate Jew. A Jew, in blood and thought and spirit. One day he walked in the garden of Capernaum. Nearby, at the foot of a hill covered with yellow flowers, was the place where Jesus had fed the multitude with the loaves and fishes. Mond walked among the fallen columns of Capernaum, with an old

Franciscan monk, a quiet-voiced and dear man who 1921
seemed to live half-way between the earth and sky. Mond talked to him. As they walked, pausing to lean against an old oil press, looking out over the water of Galilee to the golden shores of Trans-Jordan, Mond seemed to lose himself in time. The eucalyptus trees of Galilee faded away and the grim, stiff firs of Ober Hessen took their place. The eighteenth-century figure of Meyer Mond stirred again, blind and alone in his shop. A Jew of the Jews, persecuted by the Christians. Struggling with his sixty years and his blindness, going out into the little German village to find a wife, waiting until his son was old enough to pray for him, and then taking his place in the interminable line of fathers and sons. Alfred Mond no longer saw himself as an English statesman, nor as a Captain of Industry. 'I do not consider myself as an Englishman. I am a Palestinian...my heart is in Eretz-Israel', he said. The mountains of business papers faded away and the hills of Trans-Jordan shone before him. The rough road of conquest was smoothed and it became the water of Galilee, moving gently at his feet. He talked of his 'holy and deep feeling'. He said, 'I see the great hand of God who watched us, who led us back from Egypt into Eretz-Israel'.

Mond walked back to Migdal and he saw the handful of Jews who were gathered there to meet him. He went back towards Tiberias and, as he walked, he turned to someone who was with him and said, 'These are my people. This is my electorate. These are my people'.

1921 The biographer has talked to many men who knew Lord Melchett. Some say that he was a cruel man: that he was bitter and ruthless in pursuing his purposes. Some few have said that the quality of mercy was not in him. This was because of a grim earnestness with which he did any work which displeased him. Not even those who loved him most deeply can say how far his motives and his actions were related to each other. Even these can only conjecture, for he was a man in whom motives were twisted and carved before they became actions. His history and the way of his career may have made him seem to be hard. But the biographer believes, after examining many thousands of documents and letters, that there was always a wistful and fugitive sadness behind the industrialist and the politician. Melchett certainly showed little tolerance of human weakness. But this did not mean that he was intolerant of humanity. His wistful and fugitive sadness showed itself in the rarest glimpses, even to his own family. The scene of the beginning of the war, when he closed his eyes against the accusations of *German* and *Jew* and said, 'I shall not retire into the country, I shall go into the Government instead', might be taken as a key to the kind of struggle he put up whenever he was deeply hurt or disturbed. His was for ever a struggle of worldly wisdom and character over feeling. But there had to come a time, and it came with Palestine, when his defences were to be swept away. There, beside Galilee, he had no table of shrewd directors nor a House of Commons to observe every inflection, every idea that

came from him. When he turned his back upon Palestine, to return to England, a fear seemed to possess him. Perhaps his family would not understand. He had never talked of himself as a Jew. He had none of the trappings of a Jew, beyond his own physical self. He wrote a letter to his wife, a violent letter in which grammar and spelling and legibility were forgotten. No piece of paper ever held such a stumbling confession, so haltingly phrased. He tried hard to veil his passion with practical affairs. The changes, he said, were 'entirely and psychologically very fundamental for a Jew'. There was a 'deep spiritual, quite apart from an economical, conception.... Many questions that seem difficult in Europe simplify themselves on the spot. In Palestine, you are either a Jew, a Mohommedan or a Christian.... I have learned much I didn't know and which, possibly, no one who is not a Jew will ever be able to understand, for it can only be felt.... It is impossible to put it all on paper. But the Hills of Judaea are to-day as dramatic as in the days of the prophets and the Lake of Galilee smiles in its beauty as when Jesus of Nazareth walked by its shores. I have lots to tell you and I shall have much to do.... *I have never lived so intensely as a Jew before*'.

The next time he visited Palestine, Mond came home through Rome. Many times, since he was a boy, he had gone to Hadrian's Villa to recreate his dream. Many times he had driven over the Campagna, to walk among the fallen columns and in between the cypresses. But this time he did not go there. Hadrian had expelled the Jews from Jerusalem. He had impaled a swine's head over the gate of the city. He had for-

1921 bidden the keeping of the Sabbath, the reading of the law, and he had forbidden circumcision. Among all the bloody tyrants who had injured Melchett's race, Hadrian was exalted. If he had gone to the ruins now, he would have discovered the sinister shadow of Hadrian's tyranny which he had never thought of before. Never again did Alfred Mond go near to the Villa at the foot of the Tivoli hills. But one afternoon he drove out to see Michael Angelo's Moses. Lord Melchett said, 'I never understood its greatness when I was younger. But now I know, when I look at those amazing eyes, why he looks like that. He was the man who had seen God'.

This great change came to Alfred Mond in 1921. His secret was barely suspected. True, he wrote and talked about Palestine, and he was elected to honourable places as a Zionist. It seemed that Zionism was just one part of his full life. Few people knew that he had made a vow that he would amass a fortune of fifteen millions, that he would work ruthlessly, until he had enough money to bring the Jews back to their country and that he intended to make his home there. He bought the actual land upon which he had stood beside the shores of Galilee, the land upon which Mary Magdalene had walked as a girl. He planted trees there. Almost secretly, he planned this strange end to his life. He would resolve and emancipate his fortune in the rationalisation of his father's companies. He would build a villa beside the blessed water. He would plant the garden with oleanders and cypresses, roses and honeysuckle, and there he would retire. He confessed the purpose after he had been working on it for two years, to a friend, upon a hill in

The awakening of the Jew

Palestine. The friend had allowed him to walk on alone. 1921
When Mond came to the brow of a hill, he found a settlement he had seen a few years before. From a tiny and impoverished cluster of houses, it had grown to prosperity. The sun shone down upon a scene of orderly plantations, tractors turning over the loam, Jews and Jewesses working in the fields. When the man came up to him, he saw Mond standing with his hands taut at his side. His face and his body were stiff with emotion.

1921-1931

THE British people have gained their reputation for Empire building by a series of fortunate accidents and through the colonising genius of a few great pioneers who were zealots. Our Government has done very little at any time to hold the loyalty of the dominions and colonies. If it were not for the safety which lies in mass common sense, and for the 'three elements, of miracle, mystery and authority', still held by our Sovereign, in the most personal sense, the Empire would have tumbled to pieces many years ago.

At the end of the war, the British people returned to their old disinterest in the new countries, to which the soldiers had returned. How was it possible, therefore, for the Jews to suppose that either our Government or our people could be interested in the resettling of the Zionists in Palestine? Even the racial and economic ties between Great Britain and her dominions were not enough to stir the English to anything more than sentimental gratitude for the service of the Dominions in the war. How then was it possible for the Jews to expect Mr Balfour's graceful Declaration to be more than a passing gesture—more than a paper, to be waved ceremoniously, and then put into a pigeon-hole and forgotten?

These are questions which are awakened by reading the letters written by Lord Melchett when he came back from Palestine. He had identified himself with a passion. He had identified himself with a movement

which could not be approached purely economically, 1921-1931
or intellectually. He returned to England and he found apathy and suspicion when he forced the cause of Zionism upon the officials. Sometimes he found affronts and he was obliged to face the criticism that his Jewish fanaticism, coming so late in life, was not sincere. Sometimes, he *did* tire of the relentless propaganda, the complaints, the efforts to make him do more and more. Sometimes the hopelessness of the cause swept him into despair. But always, he seemed to rise above the unreasonableness of the demands made upon him, and to return to the banner, again and again, driven by the increasing realisation that he was a Jew.

When he had been back in England for a few weeks, reason and statistics broke in past the fanaticism. He saw the settlement of the Holy Land in terms of law and economics. The business man in him caused him to curb his zeal and to work cautiously. But, for the most part, in pressing the problems of the Jews before the British Government, he strained friendships, and he tired those officials who had been trained to colonise by slow penetration. They were abashed before this passion, this almost terrible awakening of the Jews. And being abashed, they answered his letters with evasions. Unstirred by the warnings of the war, they settled down to their old habit of 'hating abroad'.

Lord Melchett was working upon other schemes. Imperial Chemical Industries held him prisoner. Empire Economic Unity and the Melchett-Turner Conference demanded his time. But, when he could, he went about the country and the world, preaching this new theme. When he spoke in Ottawa, he said:

1921-1931 I have only one ambition, that before I end my days, I may retire from the business of the world and go and spend the rest of my days in my little cottage on the Lake of Galilee, as a true Jewish philosopher.

Dr Chaim Weizmann became his friend. 'My dearly beloved friend', he addressed him. The influence and prestige Melchett had built up were all jeopardised in the new interest. He was made President of the English Zionist Federation. Then he became joint Chairman of the Council of the Jewish Agency, the body recognised by the League of Nations as being directly responsible for the progress of Zionism. Thus exalted among the Jews, Lord Melchett enjoyed a new kind of power. His name had percolated to almost every Jewish town in Europe and it was to him that appeals were sent from Galicia and Poland, when three hundred towns were devastated in two pogroms. This was an astonishing tribute and expression of trust.

The newspapers were bombarded with his letters. 'Palestine ought never to have been put under the Colonial Office', Lord Melchett wrote to Lord Beaverbrook during the disaster of 1929.

It ought to be under the India Office, which is used to dealing with Eastern people. . . . We might just as well say that we must evacuate India because of the Moslem rows there, of a much more dangerous character, as that we must evacuate Palestine because, once in six years, there is a week's trouble.

We simply cannot evacuate Palestine for the reason that if we did, the Italians would be only too glad to walk in. They are very anxious to obtain the Mandate and the French would support them. It would give them command of one bank of the Suez Canal. . . . It would also give them command of our flying route to India. . . . They would then command a magni-

ificent naval harbour at Haifa, the outlet of what is probably the most important oilfield outside the United States of America—the Mosul oilfields. 1921-1931

Lord Melchett pleaded with Lord Beaverbrook.

Don't allow yourself to be influenced by Rothermere, who writes the greatest nonsense and the worst informed stuff I have ever read in my life on this subject. He may know something about American stocks, but he certainly knows nothing about politics in the East.

Lord Beaverbrook was not so easily convinced. He believed that Palestine was of no use in the defence of the Canal and that 'we would do right to pull down our flag in that rocky and barren country'.

Melchett did not see it as a 'rocky and barren country'. He had bought hundreds of acres of land: he had seen the Dead Sea Concession and the Rutenberg Electric Power Concession growing towards strength. He had been back to Palestine and he had seen the barren valleys waking to the vigour and prosperity of agriculture. He had seen the Plain of Jezreel, and the slopes cursed by David, blossoming as the rose. He had written, again and again,

And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

There was no going back now. Many years before, when Melchett met Balfour on the Continent, he had written to his wife, '... he is not easy to get nearer to. He is very nice if we meet anywhere and chats amiably enough for a few minutes... of course I can't press myself on him'.

Now they understood each other completely. They

1921-1931 met and they were candid and enthusiastic over a common ideal. Melchett peddled an unpopular cause. Upon the one side, he was pressed by the Jews, who saw immediate release from their grim tradition, in Balfour's Declaration. They were impatient: they were divorced from all sense of restraint or tact. Their very passion blinded them to reason. From the darkest corners of Europe, they were pouring down upon the holy earth. Eleven languages were being spoken in one little settlement. An entire Jewish city was growing upon the edge of the Mediterranean, a conglomeration of the architecture of a dozen countries. There was no time to wait. The harm of two thousand years was to be washed away in a minute. They harangued Melchett, in their impatience.

Upon the other side, he had the British Government and the responsibilities of his position as Joint Chairman of the Jewish Agency. This position made him partly responsible for the Zionist movement of the entire world. He had to try, with his friend Dr Weizmann, to interpret the tardy and careful methods of Downing Street to the violent fanatics who stamped the earth of Palestine with impatient feet.

The tumour burst in 1929. Palestine was ugly with murder, rape and violence. The story is so hideous that if you go to Jerusalem to-day, the stain of it still befouls the whole country. The wily Arab, with the deep secrets of the desert in his eyes, had sat back long enough. *He* had not stamped the earth impatiently. *He* was not tortured and amazed with the hopes of emancipation. He waited. At what was to him the right moment, he rose against the Jewish invaders and,

through them, against the British officials. The Arab 1921-1931
believes that no civilisation but his own can thrive in
Palestine. He tells the story of Greek and Roman,
Egyptian and Turk, to prove his theory. He believes
that the desert will wait, but that, in the end, it will
rise and protest against the invaders. The desert pro-
tested in 1929. It turned Jerusalem into a bloody fury.
Hadrian stalked through the holy streets again and im-
paled the head of a swine over the gate of the city.

The British officials in Jerusalem were bewildered
and Lord Passfield was careful. Melchett would have
preferred the word *stupid*. When the story of the riots
reached England, Melchett rose to splendid, but sadly
ineffectual anger. He resented the English attitude: that
Zionism was no more than 'an amiable foible of
Balfour's'.

When the riots were followed by Lord Passfield's
White Paper, the last barricade of restraint was broken
down. Melchett turned the affairs of his industry and
his politics aside, and focussed all his bitterness upon
Lord Passfield. The British Minister was unmoved. The
Colonial Office was used to the calm system of pene-
tration by which other colonies were developed and it
could do nothing with these Eastern brats. Arab and
Jew turned again to their bloody feud and Sir John
Chancellor answered Melchett's pleas that the Jews
should be protected by saying that there had been cases
of Jews sniping special constables and soldiers. Lord
Passfield pounced upon the opportunity to answer Mel-
chett and he reported the alleged sniping to him on
September 4th, 1929. The dates in this story are im-
portant. Melchett was so distressed by the allegations

1921-1931 brought against the Zionists that he sent his own secretary to Palestine to make enquiries. Ten months passed before he could receive a satisfactory answer from Sir John Chancellor. At first, Sir John Chancellor was asked to substantiate his charge. He said he could not discuss it. When ten months had passed, an answer was at last extracted from him by Lord Passfield and in this answer he said that he wished to make it clear that he made no general charges against the Jews in Palestine. He was sure that the two cases he cited were persons with revolutionary sympathies.¹

So antagonistic did the officials become that when Lord Melchett asked for protection of his house and plantation at Migdal, on the shores of Galilee, where he had invested twenty thousand pounds, the protection was refused him. And he was an ex-Minister of the Crown.²

To find the rights and wrongs of this turmoil is too great a pilgrimage for this biography. They are the rights and wrongs of Zionism, with which this book cannot be concerned. It is for us to see Melchett, dragged between these two forces, the one so passionate and unreasonable, to which he had pledged himself: the other so English, so calm and so secure, expressing itself in the words of the Minister, 'It would be premature at the present moment to publish a statement of future policy'.³

Something had to break. The Zionists, estranged

¹ From a memorandum among Lord Melchett's papers, July, 1930.

² Lord Melchett to Lord Passfield, September 9th, 1929.

³ Lord Passfield to Lord Melchett, August 28th, 1929.

from English conditions, waiting upon the shore of the Mediterranean for the miracle of their emancipation to happen over night, at last turned upon Dr Weizmann and Lord Melchett. They were accused of defending the British Government against Zionism: of 'continual subordination to the Government, for the sake of peace'. 1921-1931

In October of 1930, Lord Melchett was almost broken by the state of Palestine. He was bewildered in the chaos. The Zionists were disappointed and angry. They said that he was not forcing the British Government to fulfil the promise of the Balfour Declaration and that he was sacrificing them to Downing Street. Then came the final blow of the White Paper.

Lord Melchett wrote to Dr Weizmann:

When the Jewish Agency was formed, I accepted the Joint Chairmanship of the Council and the Chairmanship of the Political Committee. Under the present circumstances, I feel that I cannot usefully continue to occupy these offices and I therefore have no alternative...except to resign them, which I now formally beg to do.¹

This was a powerful protest from an eminent man. Melchett was irreplaceable as a medium between the Jews and the Government. Dr Weizmann also resigned in protest. The creation he had so ardently begun seemed to be destroyed. It was not until twelve months later, after Melchett's death, that the Prime Minister's letter revived the confidence of the Zionists in the Mandate.

In some astonishing way, Alfred Mond had become a Jew, in spite of a Christian family which might have engulfed him; in spite of a purely philosophical and

¹ To Dr Chaim Weizmann, October 21st, 1930.

Alfred Mond

1921-1931 non-Jewish education and a father and mother who were divorced from active Jewry.

All the tempests of change and pain that are hurting Palestine to-day have grown beyond Alfred Mond's story. A new regime has set in. A new Governor is slowly smoothing out the wrinkles of the country's pain. To hope that peace will come to Palestine is as pretty a gesture of optimism as it is to hope that peace will come to the whole of mankind. A century is the winking of an eye, where the history of the development of human nature is concerned. But, however far the story stretches into infinity, Alfred Mond's name will be important in the history of Zionism.

In the spring of 1932, the author went to Tel Mond, the settlement which Alfred Mond inspired. Early in the morning, as the sun was rising over the Plain of Sharon, he joined the Jews of the settlement upon the high ground, where the foundation stone of Alfred Mond's memorial was to be laid. The long agony of anger between Jews and Arabs was forgotten. The pogroms and the ghettos of Europe were dim, over the mountains, over the plains, over the seas. Upon a crisp morning such as this, they were something to shudder about and dismiss from the memory. The Jews had come from many countries, under Alfred Mond's wing, to grow oranges on the Plain of Sharon. Their trees were now as tall as themselves. The leaves shone like jade in the morning light. Upon the high ground they were gathered, diverse in tongue, diverse in blood, but bound together in this deep, mysterious energy which draws the Jews back to fight for their earth again.

The author is a Christian. He only half compre-

hended the scene: the Hebrew scroll buried in the earth, the name of Mond buried in the earth, the story of the belated blossoming of the Plain of Sharon. A trowel was placed in his hand and he was allowed to smooth some of the oozy concrete which covered the scroll. Above it, a colossal white figure was to be built, with its hand pointed to the sky. 1921-1931

The sun rose and the plain was gay with light and colour. The Jews went about their business. Among them, Alfred Mond's son walked. The Jews had not seen him before. To them, coming from the scattered corners of Europe, he was Alfred Mond's son and, for this reason, sacred to them. They had not danced for a year after Mond's death. But, when the year was over, and when Henry Mond came to them for the first time, they danced in the lamplight all night, and then, after working all day, they danced through the second night, until it was morning.

The violence of the Zionists may be beyond our understanding. We may sit back in our English security and dismiss their passions as a mystery we cannot solve. But, to come near the Jews on their own earth obliges one to give one's compassion, one's tenderness and one's respect to them. And it helps us to understand why Alfred Mond was such a tangle of motives, such a lonely man among those whom he served: such a great man, by the quality of his mind and inspiration, if not a great man in the terms of worldly achievement.

CHAPTER XXXVI

1930 **I**N September of 1930, when he returned from the United States, Lord Melchett was so ill that he had to be carried from the ship at Southampton and to his bed at Melchet Court, twelve miles away. In October he was brought to his house in London, where he died at the end of the following December. His illness was long and painful, but from the stillness forced upon his body, some added strength seemed to be given to his imagination. Letters poured out from under his hands and there was the slashing of the earlier fighting days in his phrases. Lord Beaverbrook has said that even with the illness dragging him down towards death, Lord Melchett remained 'a splendid figure and grand dreamer', seeing fresh visions, in which the affairs of Westminster, of the Empire and of Palestine were disentangled. Winter was clearing his London garden of its leaves: the flowers in his room were orchids, and roses, from the warmer south. Beside him, on the table, were reports from Migdal. They were planting his garden, and he sketched plans and lists, increasing the design of beauty which he wished to surround the villa beside Galilee.

When December was almost passed, with Christmas at hand, Lord Melchett seemed to know more certainly that he was dying. A doctor had warned him two or three years before. The members of his family, stealing in to see him, knew nothing of this.

One day, as he lay in his bed upstairs, in all the dis-

comfort of his illness, which required that his limbs 1930
should be strapped up, his son told him that his two
grandsons were downstairs and asked if he would see
them. His reply was characteristic of the patience and
unselfishness that marked the last three months of his
life. He said, 'No, I won't see them. I don't want to
frighten them. I don't want them to think of me as a
sick, old man. Children hate people who are ill. I want
them to think of me as a strong, active man'. More
letters came from Palestine. They were building his
house beside Galilee: the lowland beside the water was
already covered with orange trees, and figs and bananas.
The cypresses were already high, making frames for
the little scenes of water, Arab boats, golden coastline
and lazy camels. The jacarandas were waiting to break
into their first blossom. In the coming March, the
drive would be wild and lovely with their high, sweep-
ing blue fronds.

The Jewish settlement was built upon the hill behind
his estate. Here, like his own child, reared and tendered
and succoured, the colony was finding prosperity and
a degree of contentment. The long shoreline was to be
outlined in oleanders. Soon, they too would bloom,
white oleanders, a wave of white spray, breaking on to
the lawn. He had asked for roses and a line of carnations
stretching right across the garden. He seemed to pour
more honest love into the making of the pink house
and the garden, than into any other interest of his life.

Westminster and Migdal were far apart. It may have
been a confusion of motives that made him turn so
passionately to Palestine in the end. He had said that
in a small country, one could be an influence *and a*

1930 *power*. In England, an individual could make no more than a contribution to the already overwhelming conglomeration of thought and action. With power, there would have been peace. Especially in the garden at Migdal. True, the seaplane from Athens would drop down upon the water before his house, every week, with English papers and English visitors. But they would pass. 'I have made for myself a quiet place where I may be alone', he told somebody.

By the twenty-fourth of December, Lord Melchett was unconscious, and in the brief moments when he emerged from the haze of his illness, he could only half recognise his wife, his son and his daughters. Christmas Day came with the certain knowledge that Lord Melchett was dying. The paragraphs in the newspapers grew into columns: the columns into dramatic announcements, spreading throughout the world. Across continents was the sudden realisation of his influence and the power of his mind. In this moment, many writers summed up the story of his career and they labelled him as being either a big man or a powerful man. In the Victorian century, he might have achieved the romantic position of Disraeli whose story was so near to his own. The Victorians were hero worshippers. They based their judgments upon a consideration of human virtues. When Melchett was dying, the basis of judgment had changed: we had come to a state in which we enlarged the faults in public men and ignored their virtues. The Victorian basis was more sound, because virtues are more essentially part of a man than his faults.

All the eighty-three men to whom the author has

spoken of him have admitted Alfred Mond's intellectual 1930
gifts and the powers of his imagination. But the most
generous judgment of his talents and character comes
from a foreigner. Signor Mussolini said twice, 'Alfred
Mond was a *great* man', when the author talked with
him in Rome. And nobody is more careful of the value
of words than Signor Mussolini, when a note-book and
pencil are busy in the hands of his interviewer.

That Alfred Mond exalted industry: that he became
a Peer, a Privy Councillor and a Fellow of the Royal
Society does not matter. We know these things from his
story. What does matter in our estimate of him is his
moral courage. It carried him through a hell of frustra-
tion. The moment in which he faced the war was an act
of moral courage which must place him forever among
the brave men.

If Alfred Mond were alive to-day, we might realise
the true value of his gifts, for we need them. He was
not old. He died in the fullness of his power and his
reputation: the last and most terrible frustration in a life
of frustrations. His achievements do not matter: they
belong to the history of action. He was morally
courageous in the face of obstacles and it was because
of this that his death was a loss and tragedy. He threw
light upon problems which were obscure: his place is
in the history of thought and imagination rather than
in the history of industry and politics.

Christmas day passed slowly. Messages poured into
the house, but they could no longer be shown to him.
The last he was informed of was one from the King,
and another from Mr Lloyd George. '... in the face of
death, nothing but the old friendship remained.'

1930 There was one last tremendous rally of his energies. In the afternoon, Henry Mond went in to see his father. The dying man asked for his watch and for a cigarette. The affairs of the world were suddenly clear to him again. The Trades Disputes Act was up before Parliament and, at the point of death, Lord Melchett analysed the position, and arraigned the politicians involved for their stupidity.

When his cigarette was almost finished, he crushed it into the ash tray and said, 'Run along now, I am tired'. There was no attempt at farewell. His last words were of a problem of human existence.

Lord Dawson of Penn has said: 'I have seldom seen such a brilliant rally of the mind when the powers of the body had ebbed away so far'. About midday, on the twenty-seventh of December, Melchett died.

In the evening, Mr Charles S. Jagger the sculptor came, to make a death mask. Jagger had known Melchett well. He has said to the biographer, 'I knew every line of his face. When I went in to the bedroom, I was amazed. His face had changed. All the lines I knew seemed to have gone and, around his mouth, there was a smile so radiant that you can see it in the bronze of the mask'.

At night, the Zionists came and watched by him. One by one, black-coated, sombre and still, they came to sit beside him and whisper their ancient prayers.

His son and daughter lifted Alfred Mond's head and put Palestine soil beneath it. Jewish hands tended him. A Jewish Rabbi buried him. And then, as if the centuries of estrangement from their faith were as nothing, the scene of Ziegenhain came back again. Father to son, Father to son. It is the irrevocable law

Death

of the Jews. Old Meyer Mond, rolling his head upon 1930
the pillow, praying

... *O Lord, send out Thy Holy Spirit upon us*

... *Spread the pavilion of Thy peace over us...*

The Jew is a Jew. A Victorian century might estrange him from the law of his kind. Success might lift him beyond the simple prayer in the little house at Ziegenhain. But in the end, when they carried Alfred Mond to the vault, his Christian son whispered, beside his coffin, in Hebrew,

May the great Name of the Lord be exalted and hallowed throughout the world which He hath created according to His will....

May abundant peace from Heaven, life, redemption, comfort, healing, pardon and enlargement be granted unto us and unto all Israel; and say ye, Amen.

May He who maketh peace in His high heavens grant peace unto Israel and unto all mankind; and say ye, Amen.

Almost two centuries rolled back. As in the beginning, the son went back to his mother's house to comfort his family in their grief.

THE END

POSTSCRIPT

Only those who were very intimate with my father knew the deep passion for beauty that was his inward characteristic.

His love of the arts, and chiefly of the most inspired and freest works, constantly transcended his disappointment in the weaknesses and failure of human life, which his intellect displayed to him too clearly for real happiness.

Next to establishing his people, the Jews, on their sacred land, he would, I know, rather have produced a work of art of the highest order, than have achieved any other ambition during his passage in this world. His physical nature precluded the fulfilment of this psychic desire.

It remained for him to create in the moment of death a piece of sculpture; his favourite amongst the arts: which I believe expresses more than any known example that peace which he so constantly desired, and was denied; whose smile comprehends the whole mystery of life and death in its ultimate human perspective.

To me it conveyed a message which I could readily grasp in the weeks following his departure; when the mind was transfigured by a great event.

To the world, I feel sure, it will convey a message which those in grief will understand; and will never sadden those to whom life brings joy.

It is his last word: after an intensely creative life which had caused him to look deeply into humanity. There is nothing he did which expresses so perfectly his all pervading philosophy; or which would have given him greater delight to accomplish.

HENRY MOND



DEATH-MASK

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